



# Criteria for SQF Training Centers and Training Courses

Course Criteria and Guidelines for Licensed  
SQF Training Centers

**8th Edition**

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## **Introduction**

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The SQF Code is a process and product certification standard. It is a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP)-based food safety and quality management system that utilizes the HACCP principles and guidelines defined by either the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Food (NACMCF) or the CODEX Alimentarius Commission, and is intended to support industry or company branded product and to offer benefits to suppliers 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 Marketing Institute (FMI) since 2003, and was recognized (at level 2) in 2004 by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) as a standard that meets its benchmark requirements.

This document outlines:

1. training course requirements necessary for both the Implementing SQF Systems and Advanced SQF Practitioner training courses;
2. the training goals for the training courses;
3. the minimum training course duration;
4. the minimum pre-course qualifications for participants;
5. the skill requirements for trainers;
6. the evaluation for the training courses;
7. the assessment of participant's knowledge
8. the defined course materials;
9. the provided course certificates; and
10. the available translations of the course materials.

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## Implementing SQF System Course Criteria

The “Implementing SQF Systems” training course is designed to enable interested parties to fully understand the SQF Code requirements so as to be better equipped to implement and maintain an SQF System. This criteria document details the requirements of a licensed SQF training center for delivering the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course. Specific details of the course are contained in Appendix 1 and the course assessment in Appendix 2.

### 1. TRAINING GOALS

The goals of the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course are to:

- promote an understanding of the SQF Code.
- create a knowledge base to facilitate the successful implementation of an SQF System.
- show how a HACCP-based approach manages food safety and quality hazards in an operation.

### 2. PREREQUISITE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To facilitate a deeper understanding of the course content, it is required that those course attendees and SQF professionals, including SQF practitioners to have successfully completed a HACCP training course.

As defined in the SQF Code, HACCP training means training that meets the CODEX guidelines or NACMCF HACCP principles, and this training is:

1. HACCP training course used extensively in a country.
2. Administered and delivered by an institution recognized as a food safety training center of excellence and issues a certificate of attendance to attendees.
3. Shall be a minimum of two days in duration.
4. Shall be examinable.

### 3. TRAINING COURSE

SQF Systems vary depending on the food industry sector and the type of food business. Therefore training is to be adapted to the particular needs of the industry sector and/or the participant.

### 4. COURSE LENGTH

The duration of the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course shall not be less than 16 hours.

### 5. TRAINERS’ KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Delivery of the course is to be conducted by a registered SQF trainer or an SQF trainer applicant under the supervision of an SQF trainer, as per the [Training Center License Agreement](#) and section 4.2 of the [Criteria for SQF Trainers](#)

Registration criteria for SQF trainers are defined in the document, [Criteria for SQF Trainers](#).

## **6. EVALUATION**

For the purposes of continuous improvement, an evaluation is required.

### **6.1 Training Center Evaluation**

The training center is to issue an anonymous evaluation at the conclusion of the course. The evaluation will critically assess, for the purposes of continuous improvement, such indicators as the performance and knowledge of the instructor, the thoroughness and depth of content presented, the degree to which the course prepared the participant to implement and maintain an SQF System, etc. The evaluation is to either be in paper and pencil format or delivered electronically.

### **6.2 SQFI Evaluation**

Additionally, SQFI may choose to provide a participant evaluation to drive continuous improvement of the course materials. The SQFI participant evaluation is provided by SQF Institute via an electronic survey. Class lists are to be provided by the Training Center to facilitate the delivery of the survey.

## **7. ASSESSMENT**

### **7.1 Assessment of Participant's Knowledge**

An assessment (in the form of an examination) of the participant's understanding of the SQF Code is required to obtain a certificate of attainment. The "Implementing SQF Systems" examination is provided by the SQF Institute and accessed by the examinee through an online vendor. Access can be found under the Training Centers tab on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).

Examinees are required to achieve a mark of 75% or greater on the examination to pass. Upon successful completion of the examination, the participant is issued a certificate of attainment.

Exam details are described in Appendix 2 of this document.

### **7.2 Examination Details and Preparation Materials for the Participant**

To aid the participant in understanding the goal and format of the "Implementing SQF Systems" examination an Examinee Guide has been prepared. The file for the Guide is provided to training centers via the secure materials site located under the Training Centers tab on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).

To aid the participant in preparing for the "Implementing SQF Systems" examination a Practice Exam is provided. The file for the Practice Exam is provided to training centers via the secure materials site located under the Training Centers tab on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).

## **8. COURSE MATERIALS**

## 8.1 Overview of Course Materials

All materials associated with the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course can be found on the Documents tab of the SQFI website and the secure Training Centers Materials page on the SQFI website (sqfi.com).

Participants of the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course are to be provided with the most current version of the following SQF-issued materials:

1. The SQF Code
2. A legible copy of the slide presentation
3. Participant Workbook

Additional materials include:

1. SQF Code guidance documents
2. SQF Practice Test
3. SQF Examinee Guide
4. 4. Supplemental information and activities as provided by SQFI, or as determined by the training center

In addition, the following trainer materials are available:

1. Implementing SQF Systems Workbook - Instructor Key

Licensed SQF training centers and their registered SQF trainers are required to utilize only current materials provided by SQFI for the presentation of the “Implementing SQF Systems” training course, as per the Training Centers License Agreement. Training centers are not allowed to alter the SQF training materials or utilize the SQF training materials for non-SQF training courses.

## 8.2 Content Overview

The content of the course is arranged to closely follow the SQF Code, ed. 7.

1. Sections 1-5 provide an overview of the SQF Program and quality systems, and Part A and Module 2 of the SQF Code and are meant to be taught to all participants.
2. Section 6: Pre Farm Gate is meant to be taught to those participants who desire specific information on the pre farm gate modules.
3. Section 7: Post Farm Gate is meant to be taught to those participants who desire specific information on the post farm gate modules.

Training centers may wish to teach the content of modules 6 and 7 in separate courses where either Sections 1-5 and 6 or Sections 1-5 and 7 are taught. In mixed classes, both Sections 6 and 7 are to be taught.

Found within the Trainer Notes of the course slides is additional information to aid both the trainer and the course participant.

### **8.3 Course Activities**

An “Implementing SQF Systems Participant Workbook” is provided to training centers via the secure materials site located under the Training Centers tab on the SQFI website (sqfi.com) to assist the participant in understanding the SQF Code and implementing an SQF System. Participants should be encouraged complete the Workbook and to retain it as a reference.

Additionally, training centers are encouraged to add examples, practical experiences and activities to the course to enhance the educational experience of the participant and to facilitate learning.

## **9. CERTIFICATES**

A certificate of attendance will be provided by the licensed SQF training center for those participants who attend the entire “Implementing SQF Systems” training course and participate to a level deemed satisfactory to the registered SQF trainer. The certificate of attendance is to include the details of the SQF training center.



## Advanced SQF Practitioner Course Criteria

The “SQF Advanced Practitioner” Course is designed for the current SQF practitioner seeking further information on how to improve and maintain the supplier’s SQF System. Through activity-based instruction, the course provides the tools practitioners need to use the internal audit program to manage, maintain and enhance the site’s SQF System; harness the corrective action/preventive action process to identify trends and build continuous improvement; communicate with senior management to more fully define the site’s commitment to food safety; and develop and prioritize key performance indicators to assure continuous improvement of the SQF System. This criteria document details the requirements of a licensed SQF training center for delivering the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course. Specific details of the course are contained in Appendix 1 and the course assessment in Appendix 2.

### 1. TRAINING GOALS

The goals of the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course are to:

- Communicate with senior management to improve demonstration of their commitment to food safety and SQF Certification.
- Use the internal audit program to manage, maintain and enhance the site’s SQF System.
- Utilize the corrective action/preventive action process as a tool to identify trends and build continuous improvement.
- Develop and prioritize key performance indicators.

### 2. PREREQUISITE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To ensure the practitioner obtains an optimal learning experience and fully benefit from this course, it is recommended that participants meet the following pre-requisites prior to attending the course:

1. Must have been through a successful SQF certification/ recertification process at least once as the SQF Practitioner.
2. Successful completion of a HACCP training class that meets the definition in the SQF Code, ed. 7.
3. Successfully complete the SQF Implementing SQF Systems examination.

### 3. TRAINING COURSE

SQF Systems vary depending on the food industry sector and the type of food business. Therefore training is to be adapted to the particular needs of the industry sector and/or the participant.

### 4. COURSE LENGTH

The duration of the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course shall not be less than 16 hours.

## **5. TRAINERS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

Delivery of the course is to be conducted by a registered SQF trainer, as per the Training Center License Agreement and Criteria for SQF Trainers, who has been specifically approved by SQFI to teach the "Advanced SQF Systems" training course.

Registration criteria for SQF trainers are defined in the document, Criteria for SQF Trainers.

## **6. EVALUATION**

For the purposes of continuous improvement, an evaluation is required.

### **6.1 Training Center Evaluation**

The training center is to issue an anonymous evaluation at the conclusion of the course. The evaluation will critically assess, for the purposes of continuous improvement, such indicators as the performance and knowledge of the instructor, the thoroughness and depth of content presented, the degree to which the course prepared the participant to implement and maintain an SQF System, etc. The evaluation is to either be in paper and pencil format or delivered electronically.

### **6.2 SQFI Evaluation**

Additionally, SQFI may choose to provide a participant evaluation to drive continuous improvement of the course materials. The SQFI participant evaluation is provided by SQF Institute via an electronic survey. Class lists are to be provided by the Training Center to facilitate the delivery of the survey.

## **7. ASSESSMENT**

### **7.1 Assessment of Participant's Knowledge**

The goal of the "Advanced SQF Practitioner" examination is to assess the knowledge of the experienced SQF Practitioner.

It is recommended that the examinee successfully complete the "Advanced SQF Practitioner" course or successfully complete a Corrective and Preventive Action course and/or internal auditing course prior to attempting the "Advanced SQF Practitioner" examination.

Examinees are required to achieve a mark of 75% or greater on the examination to pass. Upon successful completion of the examination, the participant is issued a certificate of attainment.

Exam details are described in Appendix 2 of this document.

## 8. COURSE MATERIALS

### 8.1 Overview of Course Materials

All materials associated with the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course can be accessed by approved “Advanced SQF Practitioner” trainers through a link to Basecamp provided by the Senior Technical Manager.

Participants of the activity-centered “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course are to be provided with the most current version of the following SQF-issued materials:

1. Advanced SQF Practitioner Agenda
2. Advanced SQF Practitioner Workbook
3. Advanced SQF Practitioner Course Slides
4. Edition 7.1 Module 2&11 Level 2 checklist
5. Module 2 & 11 Guidance
6. SQF Code Audit Checklist for Modules 2 & 11
7. Handout 1 - Customer Complaint Log
8. Handout 2 - Foreign Material Log
9. Handout 3 - Chocolate Cake Finished product spec
10. Handout 4 – Metal Detection Scenario Plus Record
11. Handout 5 – Maintenance Clearance Scenario Plus Record
12. Handout 6 – Baker Mix Training Needs matrix
13. Handout 7 – Cake Quality Plan
14. Handout 8 – Training Register
15. Handout 9 – Food Quality Plan QA Check
16. Handout 10 – Food Quality Plan QA Check record
17. Handout 11 – HBC Egg Specification

In addition, the following trainer materials are provided:

1. Advanced SQF Practitioner Workbook – TRAINER KEY
2. Document List - Advanced Practitioner
3. Handout 1 Customer Complaint Log - TRAINER KEY
4. Handout 2 Foreign Material Log - TRAINER KEY
5. Handout 3 - Chocolate Cake Finished product spec - TRAINER KEY
6. Handout 4 – Metal Detection Scenario Plus Record - TRAINER KEY
7. Handout 5 – Maintenance Clearance Scenario Plus Record - TRAINER KEY
8. Handout 6 – Baker Mix Training Needs matrix – TRAINER KEY
9. Handout 7 – Cake Quality Plan – TRAINER KEY
10. Handout 8 – Training Register - TRAINER KEY
11. Handout 9 – Food Quality Plan QA Check
12. Handout 10 – Food Quality Plan QA Check record - TRAINER KEY
13. Handout 11 – HBC Egg Specification – TRAINER KEY

Licensed SQF training centers and their registered, approved SQF trainers are required to utilize only current materials provided by SQFI for the presentation of the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course, as per the Training Centers License Agreement. Training centers are not allowed to alter the SQF training materials or utilize the SQF training materials for non-SQF training courses.

## 8.2 Content Overview

- Welcome, Course Overview and Introduction
- Establishing Food Safety and Quality Objectives
- Internal Audits: Using results from the internal audit program to manage, maintain and enhance the SQF System
  - Prioritization
  - Verification
  - Best Practices
- Corrective and Preventive Actions/Root Cause Analysis
- Continuous Improvement

## 8.3 Course Activities

The flow for this activity-based course is described in the Trainer Notes of the course slides and the Participant Workbook - Trainer Key.

Additionally, training centers are encouraged to add examples and real-world experiences to the course to enhance the educational experience of the participant and to facilitate learning.

## 9. CERTIFICATES

A certificate of attendance will be provided by the license SQF training center for those participants who attend the entire “Advanced SQF Practitioner” training course and participate to a level deemed satisfactory to the registered SQF trainer. The certificate of attendance is to include the details of the SQF training center.

## Appendix 1

### 1. Implementing SQF Systems Training Course Details

#### Course Goal:

The training course is designed to provide participants with an understanding of the SQF Code. It is to be conducted in a minimum of 16 hours.

#### Course Prerequisite:

- Successful completion of a HACCP training course, as outlined in Section 2 of this document.

#### Course Objectives:

The goals of the Implementing SQF Systems Training course are to:

- promote an understanding of the SQF Code.
- create a knowledge base to facilitate the successful implementation of an SQF System.
- show how a HACCP-based approach manages food safety and quality hazards in an operation.

#### Course Outline:

1. Introduction to SQF and Implementing SQF Training
  - a. Introduction to Course
  - b. Purpose of Course
  - c. Training Goals
  - d. Training Outcomes
  - e. Syllabus and Agenda
  - f. Introductions of Attendees
  - g. Introduction to FMI
  - h. History and Background of SQF
  - i. Quality, Customers and the Cost Of Quality
  
2. Preparing for SQF Certification
  - a. Introduction to the SQF Code, ed. 7
  - b. Implementing SQF Training
    - i. Examination
    - ii. Certification
  - c. Layout of the SQF Code, ed. 7
  - d. Overview of Modules and Food Sector Categories

- e. Registration on SQF Assessment Database
  - f. Use of SQF Consultants
  - g. Designation of an SQF Practitioner
  - h. Selection of Certification Level
  - i. SQF Guidance Documents
3. SQF Certification Process
- a. Overview of SQF Certification Process
  - b. Overview of SQF Program Management
    - i. Roles of Accreditation Body, Certification Body, Training Centers, Practitioners
    - ii. Role of SQF Committees and Technical Advisory Council
  - c. Selection of a Certification Body
    - i. Identification of the Scope of Certification
    - ii. Changing the Scope of Certification
    - iii. Responsibility for the Certification Decision
    - iv. Business Issues
    - v. Complaints, Appeals and Disputes
  - d. Selection of the SQF Auditor
    - i. Use of Technical Experts
    - ii. Language
  - e. The Certification Audit
    - i. Identifying the Scope of the Audit
    - ii. Audit Duration
    - iii. The Desk Audit
    - iv. The Facility Audit
    - v. System Elements
  - f. The Audit Report
    - i. Deviations from Code Requirements (Non-conformities)
      - 1. Minor, major, critical, opportunities for improvements
      - 2. Facility Audit Corrective Actions
    - ii. Audit Score and Rating
      - 1. Scoring
      - 2. Rating
      - 3. Failure to Comply
  - g. Granting Certification
    - i. Timeline for Certification Decision
    - ii. Certificate of Registration
    - iii. Use of the SQF Quality Shield
  - h. Maintenance of Certification
    - i. Surveillance Audits
    - ii. Recertification Audit

- iii. Suspension of Certification
  - iv. Withdrawal of Certification
4. Implementing an SQF System
- a. Implementation Process
    - i. Management Commitment
    - ii. Initiation
    - iii. Planning
      - 1. Documentation of the SQF Code
      - 2. Conduct a Gap Assessment
  - b. Food Safety Plan Review
  - c. Food Quality Plan Creation
    - i. Threat assessment for quality
  - d. Conduct a Pre-Assessment Audit
5. SQF System Elements (Module 2)
6. GAPs and Pre-Farm Gate (Module 7 and its derivatives) and/or
7. GMPs and Post-Farm Gate (Module 11 and its derivatives)

## 2. Advanced SQF Practitioner Course Details

### Course Goal:

The “SQF Advanced Practitioner” Course is designed for the current SQF practitioner seeking further information on how to improve and maintain the supplier’s SQF System. The course is to be conducted in a minimum of 16 hours.

### Course Prerequisite:

To ensure the practitioner obtains an optimal learning experience and fully benefit from this course, it is recommended that participants meet the following pre-requisites prior to attending the course:

1. Must have been through a successful SQF certification/ recertification process at least once as the SQF Practitioner.
2. Successful completion of a HACCP training class that meets the definition in the SQF Code, ed. 7.
3. Successfully complete the Implementing SQF Systems examination.

### Course Objectives:

The objectives of the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” course are to:

- Communicate with senior management to improve demonstration of their commitment to food safety and SQF Certification.
- Use the internal audit program to manage, maintain and enhance the site’s SQF System.
- Utilize the corrective action/preventive action process as a tool to identify trends and build continuous improvement.
- Develop and prioritize key performance indicators.

### Course Outline:

#### Day 1:

- Welcome, Introductions and Background to the Course
- Module 1 – Establishing Food Safety and Quality Objectives
  - Activity
- Module 2 - Internal Audits
  - Embedded Activities

#### Day 2:

- Module 3 - Corrective and Preventive Actions
  - Embedded Activities
- Module 4 – Establishing a Continuous Improvement Program
  - Embedded Activities
- Conclusion and Wrap-up



## Appendix 2

### 1. Implementing SQF Systems Examination

#### *a. Exam format*

The examination consists of 60 multiple choice items. The examination is offered via the Internet from an online provider accessed from the Online Examinations page of the SQFI website (sqfi.com). The examination will require the examinee to review a series of items consisting of a stem and then choose the best answer (or key) to the question by clicking on one of four possible distractors. A yellow highlight will appear around the box of the chosen distractor.

The content of the exam items are taken from the SQF Code, ed. 7 Part A, Module 2 and either Module 7 (for the pre-farm gate exam) or Module 11 (for the post-farm exam).

#### *b. Pre-farm Gate vs. Post-farm Gate Examination*

Two versions of the Implementing SQF System examination are available: Pre-farm Gate and Post-farm Gate. The pre-farm gate examination addresses topics relevant to those suppliers who grow or farm product such as food sector categories 1 through 6. The post-farm gate examination addresses topics relevant to those suppliers who pre-process or process product including food sector categories 7 -22, 27, 31, 32, 33 and 34. If the examinee is unsure of their food sector category or if their needs span both pre-farm and post-farm categories, then the examinee should choose the post-farm gate examination.

Either examination is acceptable to meet the criteria required of an SQF professional.

#### *c. Exam languages*

The Implementing SQF Systems examination is currently available in English and Mexican Spanish.

#### *d. Duration and number of attempts allowed*

The examinee is given three (3) attempts to successfully complete the examination within a fourteen (14) day timeframe. A time limit of sixty (60) minutes is given to complete each attempt of the examination.

#### *e. Passing score*

The successful completion of the examination results when the examinee achieves a passing score of 75% or higher.

## 2. Advanced SQF Practitioner Examination

### *a. Exam format*

The examination consists of 60 multiple choice items. The examination is offered via the Internet from an online provider and is accessed from the Online Examinations page of the SQFI website (sqfi.com). The examination will require the examinee to review a series of items consisting of a stem and then choose the best answer (or key) to the question by clicking on one of four possible distractors. A yellow highlight will appear around the box of the chosen distractor.

The following topics are addressed in the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” examination:

1. Develop SMART food safety and quality objectives to identify and prioritize areas of improvement
2. Use available food safety and quality data to analyze and identify areas for program improvement
3. Conduct and manage internal audits and verify the effectiveness of the preventive actions implemented
4. Understand the Corrective and Preventive Action (CAPA) process
5. Conduct a root cause analysis (RCA)
6. Build a continuous improvement program

### *b. Exam goal*

The goal of the “Advanced SQF Practitioner” examination is to assess the knowledge of the experienced SQF Practitioner.

### *c. Exam language*

The “Advanced SQF Practitioner” examination is currently available in English.

### *d. Duration and number of attempts allowed*

The examinee is given three (3) attempts to successfully complete the examination within a fourteen (14) day timeframe. A time limit of sixty (60) minutes is given to complete each attempt of the examination.

### *e. Passing score*

The successful completion of the examination results when the examinee achieves a passing score of 75% or higher.