

Energy Assessor interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Energy Assessor roles typically assess your technical knowledge, your ability to communicate with clients, and your judgement in applying building codes. You may be asked to demonstrate software proficiency or work through a scenario.

- **Technical:** Questions about NatHERS software, building codes, and thermal modelling principles.
- **Process:** Walk-throughs of how you conduct an assessment from start to finish.
- **Behavioural:** Examples of how you have advised clients or managed complex projects.
- **Scenario:** Judgement questions where you recommend improvements for a non-compliant design.
- **Regulatory:** How you keep up with National Construction Code changes and accreditation requirements.

The interview often starts with a phone screen covering your accreditation and experience. A second interview may include a practical test using FirstRate5 or AccuRate, followed by a panel discussion with technical and behavioural questions. Some employers include a site visit to see how you inspect a building.

1. Walk me through your process for conducting a NatHERS assessment from initial client brief to final certificate.

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand the full workflow and can manage a project end to end.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step walk-through: client consultation, plans review, on-site inspection, software modelling, quality check, certificate issue.

Example answer

"First, I discuss the project with the client to understand their goals and any constraints. I review architectural plans and specifications, then schedule a site inspection to verify insulation, glazing, shading and orientation. I input the data into FirstRate5 or AccuRate, run the simulation, and check the star rating against the required target. If it falls short, I test different improvement options. Once the model is accurate, I prepare the star rating certificate and compliance report, then issue it to the client and certifier."

2. Tell me about a time you advised a client on retrofit options that improved energy efficiency. What was the outcome?

Why they ask

This tests your advisory skills and ability to translate technical findings into practical advice.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on the client's problem, what you recommended, and the result.

Example answer

"A homeowner wanted to reduce their energy bills but had a tight budget. I inspected the house and found significant draughts around windows and poor ceiling insulation. I recommended draught sealing, adding insulation, and installing a more efficient hot water system. They implemented the draught sealing and insulation first, and later reported that the house felt warmer in winter and their heating ran less often. The result was lower energy use without major renovation."

3. A builder's design narrowly fails to meet the required star rating. How do you identify cost-effective improvements?

Why they ask

This assesses your problem-solving and your knowledge of thermal performance principles.

How to structure your answer

Use a scenario structure: assess the shortfall, list possible improvements, prioritise by cost and impact, recommend a solution.

Example answer

"I start by checking the model for any input errors. If the rating is still short, I look at the biggest contributors to heat gain and loss. Often simple changes like increasing ceiling insulation, improving window glazing, or adding external shading can make a difference. I then run a few simulations to compare options and their impact on the star rating. I recommend the least costly combination that gets the design over the line, and explain the trade-offs to the builder so they can decide."

4. How do you keep up with changes to the National Construction Code and NatHERS protocols?

Why they ask

This shows your commitment to maintaining accreditation and staying current.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach: subscriptions, professional bodies, training, networking.

Example answer

"I subscribe to updates from NatHERS and the Australian Building Sustainability Association. I attend webinars and training sessions when the National Construction Code is amended, and I read technical notes from software providers like FirstRate5. I also discuss changes with other assessors in my network to understand how they are applying the new requirements in practice. This helps me ensure my assessments are always compliant."

5. Describe your experience with FirstRate5 or AccuRate. How do you ensure your models are accurate?

Why they ask

This checks your technical proficiency and attention to detail.

How to structure your answer

Explain your experience level, then describe your quality assurance steps.

Example answer

"I have used FirstRate5 for most residential assessments and AccuRate for more complex projects. To ensure accuracy, I always verify the building plans against the site inspection. I double-check insulation R-values, window U-values and solar heat gain coefficients, and I check that shading and orientation are correctly entered. I also run a sensitivity check by adjusting key variables to see if the rating changes unexpectedly. If something seems off, I revisit the input data before issuing the certificate."

6. Can you give an example of a complex building you assessed? What were the challenges and how did you handle them?

Why they ask

This explores your ability to handle complex projects and adapt to challenges.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, focusing on the complexity, the challenge, and your solution.

Example answer

"I assessed a multi-storey apartment building with extensive glazing and a mix of residential and commercial spaces. The challenge was balancing thermal comfort with the architect's design vision. The initial model failed to meet the required star rating because of high solar gain. I worked with the architect to adjust the shading strategy and specify different glazing for different orientations. We ran several iterations to find a solution that met the rating without compromising the look of the building. The final design was certified and the builder avoided costly redesigns."