

CS84 Industrial Sewing Machine Operator

1. Job role

TCF sub-sector	Cross sector
Job role	CS84 Industrial Sewing Machine Operator
Job role description	Performs high-volume sewing, assembly and finishing operations using industrial sewing machinery across Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) sectors, ensuring consistent product quality, productivity and compliance with specifications. In the Australian TCF industry, the Industrial Sewing Machine Operator (sewing machinist) operates specialised equipment to construct, assemble, finish and repair a wide range of products including garments, footwear components, upholstery, leather goods, technical textiles and accessories. The role is critical in mass production and small-batch manufacturing environments where speed, precision and repeatability are essential. The role involves setting up machines, threading, selecting appropriate needles and stitch types, handling varied materials (lightweight fabrics to heavy leather and technical composites), and maintaining production flow. Operators often specialise in specific machines such as overlockers, coverstitch, lockstitch, bartack, zigzag, programmable pattern stitchers and heavy-duty straight stitchers. The position requires maintaining high production speeds while ensuring seam quality, alignment, stitch integrity and finishing standards. It includes basic machine maintenance, troubleshooting, and adherence to quality, safety and production procedures. The operator collaborates with line supervisors, quality inspectors and other operators to meet targets and resolve issues.
Performance expectations	• Achieving production targets while maintaining quality standards • Producing seams and assemblies to specification (stitch type, SPI, seam allowance) • Maintaining consistent stitch quality, alignment and finishing • Minimising rework, defects and material waste • Setting up machines correctly for different operations and materials • Monitoring output and making adjustments to maintain quality and speed • Performing routine maintenance and basic troubleshooting • Following WHS and operational procedures

	Maintaining accurate work tickets and traceability where required
Specialisation	Lockstitch, overlock/serger, coverstitch, bartack, zigzag, programmable pattern sewing, heavy-duty sewing, leather stitching, seam engineering and finishing
Application in other TCF sectors	Apparel manufacturing, footwear production, upholstery and furnishings, leather goods, automotive textiles, defence and protective equipment, technical textiles and composites

2. Key tasks and critical work functions

Key tasks	- Setting up and threading industrial sewing machines for specific operations - Selecting needles, threads and stitch types appropriate to materials and specifications - Sewing components and assemblies according to patterns and work instructions - Maintaining seam allowances, stitch density and alignment - Operating specialised machines (overlocker, coverstitch, bartack, zigzag, pattern stitcher) - Handling materials and components efficiently to maintain workflow - Inspecting work for defects and making adjustments as required - Performing basic machine cleaning, oiling and minor maintenance - Recording production output and following work ticket systems - Assisting with changeovers between styles or product types
Critical work functions	- Ensuring seam integrity and product durability - Maintaining consistent quality across high-volume production - Preventing defects such as skipped stitches, puckering, misalignment and thread breakage - Optimising machine settings for different materials and operations - Supporting continuous flow on production lines - Ensuring safe operation of machinery - Maintaining traceability and adherence to specifications - Contributing to overall production efficiency and product quality

3. Technical skills

Machine setup and threading	Configuring machines, threading paths, tension settings and stitch selection
Stitch and seam application	Applying appropriate stitch types and seam constructions
Material handling	Managing fabrics, leather, technical textiles and components
Specialised machinery	Operating overlockers, coverstitch, bartack, zigzag and pattern machines

Quality inspection	Identifying defects and ensuring compliance with specifications
Basic maintenance	Cleaning, oiling and performing minor repairs and adjustments
Process efficiency	Maintaining production speed and workflow continuity
Documentation	Following work tickets, specifications and recording output

4. Generic Skills

Attention to detail	Maintaining precision in stitching and alignment
Hand-eye coordination	Operating machinery accurately at speed
Communication	Working with supervisors and team members
Problem solving	Resolving machine and sewing issues
Teamwork	Supporting line production and workflow
Time management	Meeting production targets and deadlines
Adaptability	Working across different products and materials
Professionalism	Maintaining quality and safety standards

5. Emerging skills

Emerging skills	- Automation and programmable sewing systems - Digital pattern integration and CNC sewing - Smart textiles and technical material handling - Lean manufacturing and line balancing techniques - Real-time production monitoring systems - Sustainable materials handling and waste reduction practices
-----------------	---

6. VET Qualifications and Skill Sets

Entry-level preparation	MSTSS00015 Industrial Sewing Skill Set or equivalent
Advanced development	MST31022 Certificate III in Apparel, Fashion and Textiles or equivalent

7. Job progression

Possible job progression	Sewing Assistant → Industrial Sewing Machine Operator → Senior Machinist / Sample Machinist → Line Leader → Production Supervisor
--------------------------	---

8. Classification

Australian Qualifications Framework	Level 2-3
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Skill Levels	Skill Level 4-3
Open Source Classification of Occupations for Australia (OSCA)	Industrial Sewing Machine Operator - TCF Industry



Skills Insight is a Jobs and Skills Council funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.