

Tools for direct observation

Observation is an important method for competency-based assessment, which requires candidates to demonstrate not only what they know, but also what they can do. Observation is a method which enables you to observe directly what candidates can do. A number of tools can be developed to support this assessment method including:

- observation checklists
- questions to accompany checklists
- instructions to candidates and observers/assessors.

Observation checklists

An observation checklist is useful when observing performance in both real-work situations or in simulated environments where candidates are able to demonstrate:

- vocational skills
- employability skills
- application of workplace procedures, including OHS procedures.

An observation checklist enables the assessor or other evidence-gatherer to observe in a focussed way, to take structured notes that can be referred to when making the assessment decision, to provide informed feedback to candidates, and to enhance the objectivity of the assessment decision.

The complexity of your observation checklist will mirror the complexity of the task/tasks you are observing. In the case of clustered assessment, your checklist will need to assist you to handle the increased complexity of your task, or the sophistication of the skills you are assessing, particularly in the case of higher level qualifications. A simple list of ticks and crosses on a checklist without any other information isn't helpful and would generally be questioned by auditors.

You should also include clear instructions for the candidate and for the assessor either on the checklist or in a separate document:

- Candidates need to know exactly what is expected of them, and any materials that they are required to supply.
- Observers need to know exactly what they are looking for, what resources are needed, and any other issues that need to be taken into account. They also need to know how to use the observation checklist.

A completed simple observation checklist is provided by way of example and a template that can be adapted for a range of situations follows. In both cases, instructions for assessors and candidates would also need to be developed.

Figure 3: Observation checklist (example)

Candidate name:	John Smith	
Assessor name:	David Jones	
Units of competency:	BSBCM208A Deliver a service to customers	
Name of workplace:	ABC School	
Date of assessment:	3 March 2008	
Procedure:	Observation of candidate in their workplace dealing with a range of customers with queries, problems and complaints.	
During the demonstration of skills, did the candidate:	Yes/No	Comment
Identify customer needs by Prioritising urgency of customer's needs Offering a range of options Asking open ended questions Using active listening techniques Acknowledging personal limitations and referring to another person		
Deliver service to customer by Greeting the customer promptly and courteously Smiling Using appropriate body language Maintaining eye contact with the customer Acknowledging the complaint Summarising the customer's complaint Resolving the customer's complaint		
The candidate's performance was:	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Feedback to candidate:		
Candidate signature:		
Assessor signature:		

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Figure 4: Observation checklist (template)

Candidate's Name			
Assessor or Observer's Name			
Unit of Competency (code and title)			
Date of Assessment			
Location			
Demonstration Tasks			
Materials and Equipment			
Tasks to be Observed:	Yes/No	Comment	
The candidate's performance was:	Not Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Feedback to candidate:			
Candidate signature:			
Assessor/Observer's signature:			

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Performance questions to accompany checklists

Observation checklists may be supported by a list of performance questions, which are derived from the Evidence Guides in the unit/ units of competency. These questions include dimensions of competency, such as contingency management skills (*what would you do if.....?*), job/role environment skills (*what are the procedures and policies for.....?*) and task management skills (*what are your functions and how do you manage them when you.?*).

Figure 5: Questions to support an observation checklist – Correctional Services

Candidate name:	Joan Wilson	
Assessor name:	Ralph Scott	
Units of competency:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSCORG202A Communicate effectively • CSCORG301A Prepare reports • CSCSAS201A Maintain security • PSPOHS301A Contribute to workplace safety • CSCORG303A Conduct interviews • CSCOFM305A Supervise offenders • CSCSAS206A Respond to medical emergencies 	
Name of workplace:	Sandy Bay Facility	
Date of assessment:	3 March 2008	
Questions to be answered by the candidate:	Satisfactory response Yes ✓ No ✗	
Q1.	What would you do if you lost contact with other officers during a critical search situation? (contingency management skills)	
<i>Response:</i> Immediately radio to other search team officers and supervisor informing them of my location, current situation and requesting assistance.		✓
Q2.	What are the procedures and policies for responding to a medical emergency with an offender? (job/role environment skills)	
<i>Response:</i> Check the offender's vital signs, assess the nature of the medical condition, attempt resuscitation if necessary and then call for assistance.		✗
Q3.	What are your functions and how do you manage them when you assist with interviews and also have to report on the outcomes? (task management skills)	
<i>Response:</i> My primary functions are recording interview responses, cooperate with and assist the interviewing officer with details about the interviewee as required. I simultaneously draft interview outcomes for reporting to supervisors for further action.		✓
<i>Response:</i>		
The candidate's knowledge	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory ✓
Feedback to candidate:	Task skills are satisfactory and candidate is able to identify how to manage most unusual circumstances that may arise. However, the candidate has insufficient knowledge of the correct procedures for responding to a medical emergency with an offender and this could jeopardise their safety and well being.	
Candidate signature:		
Assessor signature:		

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Figure 6: Questions to support an observation (template)

Candidate name:			
Assessor name:			
Unit/s of competency:			
Name of workplace:			
Date of assessment:			
Questions to be answered by the candidate:			Answer/Response
Q1.			
Q2.			
Q3.			
Q4.			
Q5.			
The candidate's knowledge was:	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	
Feedback to candidate:			
Candidate signature:			
Assessor signature:			

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