Visualising Competence

Before developing the Training and Assessment Strategy (TAS) or designing an assessment tool, you need to clarify what it means to be competent for the unit(s). This is referred as visualising competence.

The following questions can help you to visualise competence:

- What are the tasks a competent worker would perform, and how would they do them?
- What would a competent worker need to know about, and how would they apply this knowledge?
- What would they do if something went wrong?
- How would they handle multiple tasks or pressures?
- What would the product they make or service they deliver look like?
- How would they transfer their skills to other contexts?

and importantly:

- What might a person who is “not yet competent” do, or fail to do?

Work out the answers using the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level of the qualification, information in the training package, the units of competency and your knowledge of industry requirements. This will build up a competency profile for the unit/work role. Find out more in Visualising Competence – Guide 1 from the Assessment Materials Kit. (in About Assessment > Resources)

Example of a Competency Profile – FDFOP2028A Operate a mixing or blending process (an AQF 2 unit for a machine operator in a food manufacturing enterprise)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A competent person can: (sample only)</th>
<th>A person who is not yet competent may:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the mixing/blending work to be done</td>
<td>Fail to use PPE correctly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select, fit and use personal protective clothing and equipment (PPE)</td>
<td>Start up the equipment without checking:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirm the supply of materials and services</td>
<td>o Work to be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct pre-start checks of the equipment and take appropriate action if there are problems</td>
<td>o Equipment readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate with operators up and down the production line</td>
<td>o Operators up and down the line are ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start the mixing process, adding materials in correct quantities and sequence</td>
<td>Make products that do not meet the specifications, and fail to make adjustments to equipment to bring the product back into specification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and adjust the equipment to ensure that the product meets the specifications</td>
<td>Have an untidy work area that could create risks to food safety and OHS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>etc</td>
<td>etc</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Understanding qualifications and the AQF

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) provides a comprehensive, nationally consistent qualifications framework for all post-compulsory education and training. It comprises titles and descriptors for each qualification level, as well as the principles and protocols for the issue of qualifications. When you are designing assessment tools it is critical to understand the AQF level of the qualification.

A common error for assessors is ‘AQF drift’, where assessments exceed the AQF level for the work role. For example, students doing a Certificate II (AQF 2) in Business may be required to be able to set up their computer workstation to minimise OHS risks. If the student was asked to write a description of the setup, it would exceed the literacy skills for AQF 2. A valid assessment would involve observing the student setting up/adjusting their work station.

For more information about the AQF see:
- Australian Qualifications Framework (website)
- Interpreting AQF Levels (in About Assessment) – a plain English interpretation of the AQF levels using common “doing words”.

‘Unpacking’ units of competency

The unit of competency provides information for building up the picture of competence.

Units of competency developed from 2013 have a new format. The principal for unpacking units remains the same. However, you will find that each new unit is split into two separate documents – the Unit and the Assessment Requirements. The Unit includes the Title, the Application (which incorporates the Descriptor), the Elements and Performance Criteria and the relevant Foundation Skills. The Assessment Requirements document includes the Performance Evidence (a revamped replacement of the former “required skills”), the Knowledge Evidence (formerly “required knowledge”) and the Assessment Conditions. When unpacking the unit of competency in this format, make sure that you are considering both documents. From the assessment development perspective, the key document is the Assessment Requirements. This document will inform your decisions about what must be included in the assessment.

The four dimensions of competence

The four dimensions of competence will help you to interpret the unit/s of competency and to develop a broad picture of the skills needed for competency. A competent worker does more than just perform work tasks – these can be seen as the tip of the iceberg; a competent worker must demonstrate the four dimensions of competence:

1. Task Skills – performance of the tasks to workplace standard. These are the practical skills the student must do and are often the easiest to identify.
2. Task Management Skills – planning and co-ordinating a number of different activities to complete a work task. They are required at all AQF levels. Traditional TAFE assessment methods may not assess these skills; incorporating them better reflects real work activities.
3. **Contingency Management Skills** – how the candidate responds when things don’t go to plan. This is another ‘real workplace’ skill that needs to be assessed; perhaps using a scenario or questions that asks ‘What would you do if...?’.

4. **Job/Role Environment Skills** – dealing with workplace expectations such as interruptions or distractions.

**Dimensions of competence** – tasks skills can be viewed as just the tip of the iceberg:

![Image of an iceberg with different skills levels]

**Figure 1: Assessment Foundation Resources, Qld VETPD**