

The Teacher/Trainer Competency Framework User Guide

Introduction

The purpose of this Guide is to describe the ways in which the Teacher/Trainer Competency Framework may be used by individuals and organisations to develop and evaluate the competencies needed by learning support professionals. Taken together, the Competency Framework and the Skillscheck self-positioning tool help learning support professionals answer the following questions:

- What are the eLearning competencies required of teachers, trainers and other professionals involved in learning and development activities?
- What competencies do I have currently?
- What competencies should I acquire in the near future?
- How can I use these tools to develop my competencies?
- How can I ensure that my performance is cost-effective (making learners more effective/productive)?

The approach recommended to approach working with the framework is first to read the User Guide, then turn to the Skillscheck tool to compare your current responsibilities with the competencies presented. This will enable you to refer to those parts of the framework that are of immediate relevance to your situation.

One of the most important things to say about the Competency Framework is that it is not intended to be a description of the competencies required by all individual practitioners. We have indicated the **core knowledge requirements** that we regard as essential for all practitioners, but the competencies presented in the framework (which are also accompanied by specific knowledge requirements) are an overview of key activities and will not all be performed by the same person. It is more likely to be the case that this range of activities will be carried out by a team of people.

At the same time, it is important to note that the Competency Framework tries to reflect the best practice that will be required of learning professionals, not just today, but over the next few years. For this reason, it is an evolving framework and will be updated to reflect the progress made in technological opportunities and professional practice.

With these two points in mind, please do not worry if you find that currently your responsibilities cover only part of the framework. The Competency Framework can help you to assess whether you are performing competently. The guide can also be used as a development tool to help you acquire other competencies as needed.

These tools presented here are not designed to represent an extra burden for professionals who are already very busy. We hope that some of the activities and techniques presented here will become part of your professional lives and help you to become more productive and effective.

Please note that the Competency Framework, Skillscheck tools and user guide are at validation stage. We are anxious to receive feedback from learning support professionals in order to improve them.

We also recommend that you visit the CEDEFOP Community Zero eTTNet website <http://cedefop.communityzero.com/ett?key=297-F448561F71>. You can join by applying for membership and you will be permitted to login and participate in the community. There you will find a variety of supporting information and tools to assist your professional development, including scenarios for eLearning activities, a collaborative learning portal, case studies and an interactive guide to innovative practices and a set of quality indicators.

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Using the Competency Framework and Skillscheck

The following part of this Guide details the uses that may be made of the Competency Framework. They are summarised as follows:

- Reference
- Self-positioning
- Development needs analysis
- Continuing professional development
- Evaluation
- Accreditation
- Recruitment

Reference

The Competency Framework can be used quite simply as a reference – to provide information about what eLearning competencies for teachers and trainers are. It might be the case that your department has decided to implement eLearning solutions and you might wish to know what new competencies this change will demand of you and your colleagues. Or you might be a freelance trainer or consultant who needs to develop his/her eLearning competencies. The Competency Framework itself is not easy reading – performance indicators and standards rarely are! However, by starting with the Skillscheck Tool you will be able to see the kinds of activities that are key to eLearning competencies. The Competency Framework itself will then give you far more information about the knowledge and standard required for a competent performance.

Self-positioning: where am I now?

If you intend using the Competency Framework – either on your own or in collaboration with your colleagues, we recommend that you look first at the Skillscheck tool. The Skillscheck enables you to identify those activities for which you are responsible today - but not how well you do them. It is a starting point. If relevant, you can then turn to the competency indicated in the grid in order to look at the knowledge requirements and performance criteria associated with these activities, carry out a self-assessment or request feedback from your managers, colleagues or learners (see evaluation section).

Working through Skillscheck might well lead you to look again at the contribution you make to your organisation and decide if it could be improved/extended. This is where continuing professional development plays a role (see CPD section).

Below you will find an extract from the Skillscheck tool. As you can see, Skillscheck contains a summary of the activities contained in an element of competence on the left. There are two columns to be completed indicating whether or not you carry out the activities described currently. Depending on the number of 'Yes' replies you have and the reason for carrying out the exercise, you may then decide that certain sections of the Competency Framework have no current relevance for you, while others describe what you are doing.

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Activities/responsibilities Are you responsible for	Yes	No	Competency Framework Ref.
Supporting groups of learners, learning communities and networks using KILT by			Unit C.3
Supporting group learning with KILT			Element C.3.1
Agreeing the purpose, process and intended outcomes of group activity with the group			
Identifying and evaluating opportunities for using KILT to support learning in groups			
Establishing the specific learning objectives and criteria for membership of each learning group			
Establishing, and monitor observance of, communication etiquette for each learning group			
Using appropriate tools and techniques to initiate, manage and close asynchronous and synchronous group discussions			
Evaluating the effectiveness of KILT in supporting groups of learners			
Providing effective support to learners with special needs and keeping them motivated.			

Development needs analysis

The Competency Framework and Skillscheck can be used to carry out a *gap analysis exercise* in order to identify activities that need to be undertaken in order to achieve or maintain an appropriate level of competence. After you have completed the Skillscheck exercise and consulted the Competency Framework, you will have a good idea of the competencies you have today. You may find that while you perform certain activities, you are not always performing to the standard indicated in the Competency Framework. For example, while you might use a range of knowledge, information and learning technology (KILT) to support learners, you do not keep yourself updated on the latest developments.

On the other hand, it might be the case that you are about to change job role or take on additional responsibilities that entail the acquisition of new eLearning competencies. You will need to make an analysis of what you can do, what you will be expected to do in the near future, using the Competency Framework initially to inform yourself about your new activities. You – and perhaps your line manager or other colleagues – will then have to decide how you will acquire the new competencies and this brings us to training and development activities.

Here is an extract from the full Competency Framework, showing part of the knowledge requirements, and one element of competence. You will see that the Unit of Competence is called *Support groups of learners, learning communities and networks using KILT*. Each unit is divided into a number of Elements, one of which is reproduced here. At the beginning of each Unit you will find a description of the knowledge required that underpins competent performance in this Unit. You will then find in each Element, a series of performance criteria that describe how a competent performance should be carried out.

Unit C.3 Support groups of learners, learning communities and networks using KILT

In this unit, the focus is on using KILT to support groups of learners in fully exploiting the benefits of group working in order to achieve their learning objectives. It involves managing the balance between

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tasks to be achieved and group dynamics. An important element of this competency is the facilitation of collaborative learning. Beyond this, a further vital competency is the ability to capture and exploit the knowledge produced during a learning event.

Knowledge required

In addition to the core knowledge requirements, to perform competently, you need to know, understand and be able to apply:

Learning Technologies

- the range of opportunities available for using KILT to support group learning and encourage learners to learn from each other
- the range of tools and techniques available for asynchronous and synchronous group work, and how to use them
- the range of online and offline media available for promoting online learning communities.
- tools and techniques for communicating effectively and promptly with learners online

Learning and development

- the importance of learners' developing and continuously reviewing their personal learning plans autonomously, and how to encourage them to do so
- how to encourage learners to participate actively and autonomously in online learning communities
- how to sequence and pace information and gauge appropriateness of language for groups of learners
- how to put learners at ease and elicit learners' personal views
- how to encourage learners to participate actively in online learning communities
- how to establish criteria for membership of online learning groups
- the importance of establishing and monitoring the observance of communication etiquette
- the range of relevant online learning communities
- how to initiate and provide on-going support for the development of online learning communities
- how to gather information about learners online
- progression routes and further learning opportunities

Element C.3.1 Support group learning with KILT

To perform competently in this element, you must ensure that you

1. agree the purpose, process and intended outcomes of group activity with the group
2. identify and evaluate opportunities for using KILT to support learning in groups
3. establish the specific learning objectives and criteria for membership of each learning group
4. establish, and monitor observance of, communication etiquette for each learning group
5. use appropriate tools and techniques to initiate, manage and close asynchronous and synchronous group discussions
6. evaluate the effectiveness of KILT in supporting groups of learners
7. challenge excluding and discriminatory behaviour or language appropriately
8. use power, authority and influence in the group constructively to enhance learning
9. deal with conflict within the group in a way that maintains the ability of group members to continue learning
10. provide effective support to learners with special needs and keep them motivated.

Continuing professional development (CPD)

One of the most widespread uses of Competency Frameworks is for professional development. It is important to look at CPD as an organic process that includes a broad range of activities from formal training programmes to informal occasions for learning. The Cedefop glossary (2000) and the Communication on Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2001) give the following definitions of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

- Formal learning consists of learning that occurs within an organised and structured context (formal education, in-company training), and that is designed as learning. It may lead to a formal recognition (diploma, certificate). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective
- Non-formal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. We may place coaching and mentoring in this category
- Informal learning is defined as learning resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure. It is often referred to as experiential learning and can to a certain degree be understood as accidental learning. It is not structured in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support. Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random).

What kinds of activities might CPD include?

- Formal training events or courses
- Membership of professional associations
- Workplace activities: problem-solving, project-based learning, discussion with colleagues, job rotation
- Consulting experts and practitioners
- Working with a coach or mentor
- Research activities: books, articles, research
- Exchanges with special interest groups or communities of practice
- Attendance at seminars and conferences

Unless one is studying for a specific qualification or seeking to acquire or improve a clearly definable skill, such as mastering a new software programme, much learning opportunity is not sufficiently and consciously exploited as to bring real results. There are certain critical aspects of CPD, which include:

- Having clearly defined goals that are expressed in terms of the acquisition of new knowledge/competencies
- Establishing a development plan with activities and timeframe to achieve the specified goal
- Building in an evaluation plan to measure progress and achievements against performance indicators
- Reflecting on learning – this activity is a vital part of productive learning: analysis of our successes and failures leads to increased self-understanding and more effective plans for continual improvement

Development: Building a portfolio of competencies

We strongly recommend that if you plan to use the Competency Framework for CPD that you think about constructing some kind of *portfolio* - either paper-based or electronic - to provide evidence of your competencies and performance. The advantage of a portfolio is that it is:

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- Holistic – it allows you to present an overview of your professional path and competencies in one place
- Job-related – it is based on the demands of your current job and prospective development opportunities
- Appropriate – you select the evidence to illustrate achievements you think are relevant
- Historic – it contains evidence of past achievements
- Prospective – it details future plans

What do we find in a portfolio?

As a portfolio is a record of your learning and development, it will probably contain:

- Details of your current post
- Job description
- Organisation chart (if you work with others)
- Summary of your experience and achievements (curriculum vitae)
- Competencies you have brought to your job
- Competencies you need to develop
- Short-term objectives
- Personal hopes and expectations
- Your evidence of competence (cross-referenced to the competencies contained in the framework)

In order to create your portfolio, you need to look at your own strengths and weaknesses by comparing your personal profile against the demands of your job and against the competencies detailed in the framework. This will help you identify your own development and learning needs, which you can then discuss with your manager and/or your mentor. You will then be able to identify your own personal development plan based on priorities and needs.

The development plan should reflect not only what is desirable, but what is possible and achievable, and should include:

- **What** is to be achieved
- **How** I will know if I have achieved it
- **When** - what is the required timescale

Evaluation

The evidence you collect in your portfolio enables an assessment of your competencies against those detailed in the Competency Framework. It is possible for you initially to carry out a self-evaluation. Following this, you may wish to involve your colleagues and managers in further assessment activities. For example, your portfolio may be used in your annual appraisal exercise. At least one professional body is also developing accreditation based on the Competency Framework that will allow you to gain external recognition in the future.

Suggested sources of evidence:

- Products – the tangible results of your professional activities
- Process – information about the methodology and rationale of your approach

Suggested types of evidence:

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- Research and continuing professional development activities
- Teamwork activities: co-operation with colleagues and with other departments, such as the IT department etc.
- Samples of work produced, e.g.
 - a learning programme you have designed
 - evaluation sheets
 - reports
- Feedback from learners, colleagues, line managers etc.
- Reflective analysis on your professional activities

The format of your portfolio will depend on whether you have chosen to work with a paper-based or electronic portfolio (ePortfolio). A paper-based portfolio is a perfectly adequate tool for presenting written documentation. It can also have certain artefacts attached to the written document and contain references to digital and online sources. The ePortfolio, however, will give you more opportunities to present a varied range of evidence, including:

- Audio files
- Graphics
- Video clips
- HTML files
- PPT presentations
- Hypermedia
- Digitized photographs

How are competencies evaluated?

Criteria for evaluation include the fact that the evidence must:

- Be based on actual performance and not just theoretical knowledge
- Demonstrate an acceptable level of competence against performance indicators (e.g. the Competency Framework)
- Demonstrate an ability to transfer competence to other work situations (i.e. if you are working in a different environment, could you still perform to the same level?)
- Be up-to-date
- Be sufficient to prove competence

Training programmes

We have seen how the Competency Framework can be used to underpin long-term self-development, which entails building on formal, non-formal and informal learning. The Competency Framework can also be used as the basis for formal training (development) programmes. Possible subjects might include:

- Designing eLearning resources
- Moderating online learning communities
- Using electronic portfolios for development, evaluation and accreditation of competencies
- Using knowledge, information and learning technologies (KILT) for learner assessment

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Other uses of the Competency Framework

The Competency Framework and Skillscheck can also be used for other purposes, which will probably be within the remit of those managers with a responsibility for managing people or resources.

The tools can be used as a reference for recruiting staff. Since they describe the activities and standards of performance of learning professionals, they can be used at all stages of the recruitment process, from writing the job specification to planning and running the interview and making a decision. They can be used as the basis of appraisal interviews and to make decisions on promotion.