

March 2025

Certificate of competence examination process

Frequently asked questions for assessment blueprinting

What is assessment blueprinting?

This is a process where examiners apply a ranking system of essential and other competencies from the competency framework to select whether a written examination paper or oral exam are going to assess them through one or more of the following question types:

Written exam:

- Multiple choice
- Short answer (includes fill in the blank answer and matching up)
- Essay (long answer)
- Drawings, markups on diagrams

Oral exam:

- Questions

Every candidate who undergoes the exam assessment process for a certificate of competence will be assessed in the same way so that it is fair, consistent and justifiable.

Blueprints are specifications or plans that can be altered from year to year to improve or change how competencies are assessed, based on results and monitoring of candidate performance and exam processes.

Note: portfolios are not part of the blueprint but a prerequisite – see below.

Why is blueprinting being implemented?

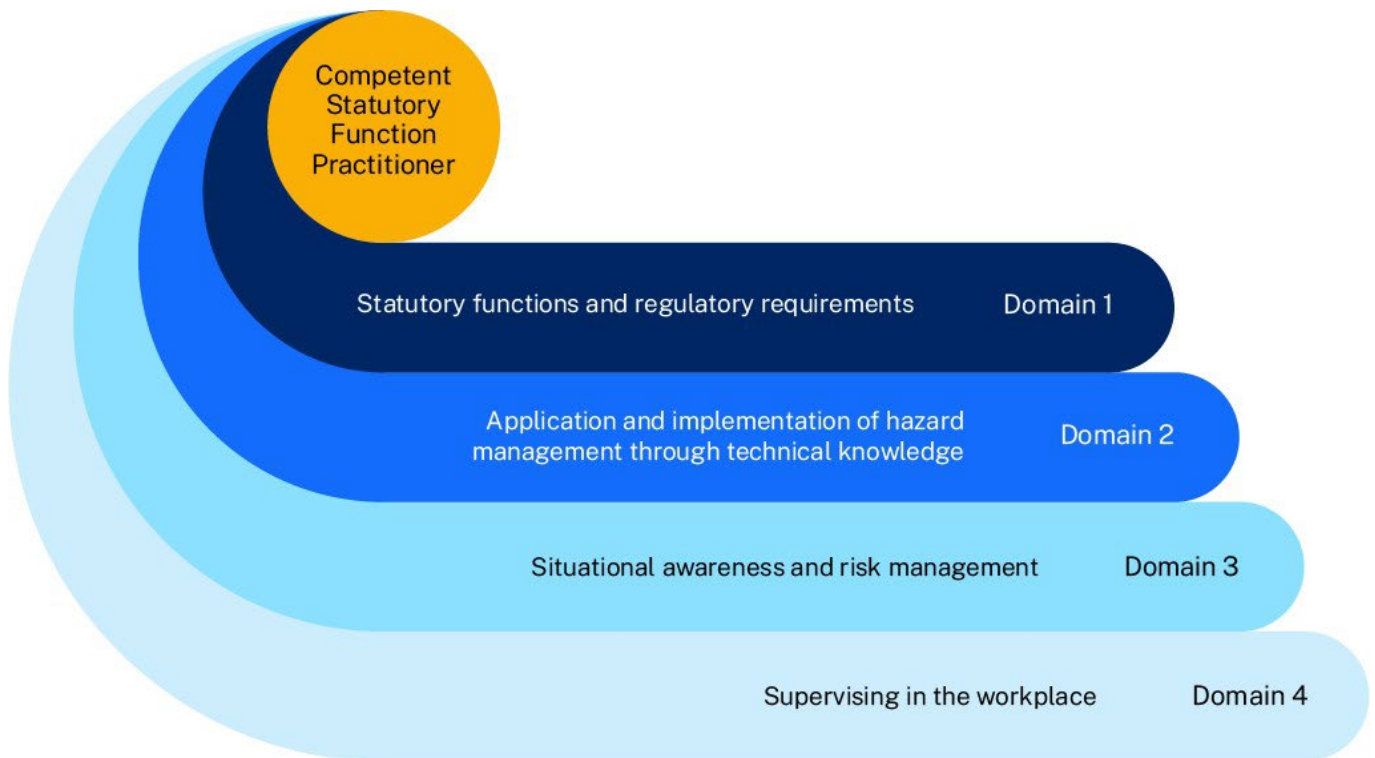
Blueprinting is the next step identified in a project by the NSW Resources Regulator with the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board, where the outcomes of function descriptions for statutory functions and their competency framework are implemented into the assessment process (refer to our [statutory functions webpage](#) for more details).

The need for blueprinting was identified in a 2019 independent review of the certificate of competence examination processes. The review found that while the process was valid, relevant and mostly current, enhancements could be made to improve its reliability and accuracy and minimise subjectivity.

What is the competency framework?

The framework is made up of the following hierarchy to specify the competencies required for each level of alike functions from 1 (supervisors to 3 managers):

- Domains: related sets of foundation knowledge, understanding and abilities.



- Focus areas: identify specific areas of knowledge, understanding, skill, or skills application within each domain
- Competencies: the knowledge, understanding and skills to be demonstrated by candidates addressing the focus areas at each level.

The competencies are numbered according to their domain, focus area and competency level. For example, competency 3.2.3, refers to the competency relevant to domain 3, focus area 2, competency level 3.

Refer to the [competencies and portfolios webpage](#) to access a copy of the Competency framework. It will inform on the possible scope of what is examined for each function so a candidate may prepare appropriately.

How do these changes affect candidates?

Blueprinting is being used by examiners for how they prepare examinations, but candidates will only see minor differences since 2022 such as the use of more types of questions. These changes will be communicated by examination panels at the briefing sessions for certificates of competence (see future dates and recordings of our sessions on our [competencies and portfolios webpage](#)).

Candidate portfolios

The portfolio, submitted as a pre-requisite with the online application on the Regulator Portal, is a tool to collect evidence that the applicant has the minimum competence prior to a candidate progressing to sitting exams.

Applicants are required to submit documents involving them in the workplace to demonstrate whether they satisfy the selected competencies or not. There will be no assessment of the quality of the documents.

Evidence required ranges from a risk assessment to reports on reviews and inspections. All evidence must be from sometime in the last five years prior to applying and a sample of them will be checked for being true records. Portfolio requirements for each certificate of competence function are further explained in the guidance '[Portfolio requirements for candidates](#)' on [our website](#).

New applicants should commence gathering their portfolio documents in preparation to be submitted with their application by the advertised closing dates.

Competency-based exam assessing

Written

Awarding marks per question with 60% or more as a pass for an exam to be competent finished in the 2023 round of exams. It is being replaced by assessing whether a candidate has 'Met' or 'Not Met' the competencies mapped to each question in each exam by marks or items awarded with a threshold mark/number for competence.

The blueprint identifies for written exams any essential questions where essential competencies are mapped to them and candidates must pass by achieving the minimum mark or responses to demonstrate competence.

Other competencies are assessed in questions which have a minimum mark to demonstrate competence. The minimum mark for each question and that obtained by each candidate are totalled to determine whether overall the candidate achieved the totalled minimum mark or converted percentage to pass the exam paper. For example, the minimum mark or converted percentage out of 100 may be 66.

It will be made clear in the results issued to each candidate for each written exam the marks awarded for each question or section of the exam paper and whether essential competency questions were passed and the exam paper overall.

Note: existing candidates will continue to sit under the rules that applied when they sat their written exams. They will receive a three-year credit for a pass on any individual paper. At the end of this three-year period, the credit will expire.

Oral

The oral exam will continue to consist of scenario questions where the candidate must achieve the minimum mark, number of items and/or specific items in their answer for each of them to pass the exam and be assessed as competent. Competencies assessed for each question can be essential, other or a combination of them.

Note: existing candidates will continue to sit under the rules that applied when they sat their exams. If they are assessed as 'not yet competent' for their first oral exam, then they will be permitted to attempt the oral exam two more times within three years of passing the written exam.

New candidates must pass all exams in a round

New applicants for a certificate of competence must be assessed as competent for all exams in that exam round in order to be granted a certificate of competence.

The reason for changing to passing all the exams in one round is because the blueprint is set for each round of exams, though it could vary between years. This is why the Resources Regulator, in consultation with the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board, is implementing this new system.

How will the changes affect how I prepare to apply for and sit examinations?

You should be familiar with the competence framework so you prepare for questions that assess them.

Further information

Information about how to apply for the certificate of competence examination process is available on the [Resources Regulator's website](#).

More information about changes to the certificate of competence examination process is available by contacting the Mining Competencies Team on 1300 814 609 (option 2 > option 3) or competencies@dpird.nsw.gov.au.

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