

# CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE EXAMINATION PROCESSES

## FAQs for assessment ‘blueprinting’

### What is assessment blueprinting?

This is a process where examiners apply a ranking system of essential and desirable competency benchmarks from [the competency framework](#) and select how they are going to be assessed through one or more of the following types:

- **Portfolio** (workplace samples)
- **Written exam:**
  - Multiple choice
  - Short answer (includes fill in the blank answer and matching up)
  - Essay (long answer)
- **Oral exam:**
  - Questions

Every candidate who undergoes the 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 competency benchmarks are assessed, based on results and monitoring of candidate performance and exam processes.

### Why is blueprinting being implemented?

Blueprinting is the next step identified in a project by the 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 [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.

## How do these changes impact candidates?

Blueprinting is being used by examiners for how they prepare examinations but candidates will only see minor differences in 2021-2022 such as the use of more types of questions. These changes are being communicated by examination panels at briefing sessions for certificates of competence (see future dates and recordings of sessions on our [website](#)).

The following outlines the key changes for candidates that will be implemented from the 2022/2023 financial year exams:

### Candidate portfolios

The portfolio, submitted as a pre-requisite with the online application on the Resources Regulator portal, is a tool to collect evidence of competence prior to a candidate progressing to sitting exams.

Applicants are required to submit documents involving them in the workplace to demonstrate they meet the selected competency benchmarks as competent 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 three 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 guidance 'Portfolio requirements for candidates' on our [website](#).

### Competency-based exam assessing

#### Written

Awarding marks per question with 60% or more as a pass for an exam to be competent will finish in the 2021-2022 exams. It is being replaced by assessing whether a candidate has 'Met' or 'Not Met' the competency benchmarks mapped to each question in each exam or portfolio.

**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 in any individual paper. At the end of this three-year period, the credit will expire.

## Oral

Will continue to be assessed by questions where the candidate is marked as competent or not yet competent for each question.

**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.

## Blueprinting approach

The written exam and the oral exam will consist of two types of competencies that candidates must satisfy:

- Essential competencies and benchmarks –ranked as essential for each statutory function will be assessed in questions and applicants must be deemed competent for all of them (100%)
- Desirable competencies and benchmarks – a selection of competencies and benchmarks that are ranked as desirable will also be assessed and applicants must be deemed competent in at least 60% or more of the questions

In marking answers, the examiners will identify the criteria for competence. The criteria will identify the possible responses (e.g. 4) and then the minimum number of items the candidate must supply in order to be assessed as meeting the benchmark (e.g. 3). This reflects that competence may not require a perfect answer but within a range that is sufficient to be assessed as competent.

## Competencies only assessed to the blueprint

There will be no longer asking additional questions of candidates to assess competencies in the oral examination which they performed poorly in the written examination.

All candidates will be asked for the same portfolio documents and the same questions in the written or oral exams in each round of examinations.

## 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 year of the exam calendar in order to be granted a certificate of competence.

The only opportunity to resit an exam will be the post oral exam in that round. Where in an oral exam, following on from the round of written exams passed, that a candidate obtains a minimum of 60% or more of essential and desirable competencies/benchmarks (or closest rounded up or down percentage), then they will be eligible to resit the oral exam in that round of exams only.

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

## What is the competency framework?

[The Competency framework](#) is the reference document for identifying and understanding competencies and benchmarks, including the necessary behaviours, skills and knowledge required to satisfactorily carry out statutory functions requiring a certificate of competence.

The framework includes eight competencies. Each competency has associated benchmarks, skills, and behavioural tendencies, grouped into three levels. These levels are based on the amount of supervision required, the level of specialisation/technical requirements and the extent of the function within mining operations. Levels are not hierarchical and do not require the previous level as a pre-requisite.

## Further information

Information about how to apply for the certificate of competence examination process is available on the Resources Regulator website.

More information about changes to the certificate of competence examination process is available by contacting the Mining Competencies and Authorisations Unit on 1300 814 609 (options 2 and 3) or [mca@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mca@regional.nsw.gov.au).

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