

Discovering Competencies

Tools for your future

Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies

Quality Standards

General Instructions

Documentation

A tool for quality assurance in competency assessment procedures for disadvantaged youth,
with a focus on young adults with a migrant background.



This document was written by members of the project "Discovering competencies – Tools for Your Future," which is funded with support from the European Commission. The contents of this document reflect solely the views of the project partners, and the Commission cannot be made responsible for the information the document contains.

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The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies receives funding from

the Berlin Senate Administration for Labour, Integration and Women
Department of Vocational Qualification

Legal information

Publishers:

Project "Discovering competencies – Tools for Your Future“ (“KompetenzStark”)¹

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Berlin, August 2012

¹ Partner institutes of this project included the Aarhus University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Education (Copenhagen, Denmark), GIB Innovation Research and Consultancy in cooperation with the Berlin Department for Labour, Social Affairs and Women (Berlin, Germany), the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece), the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development (Larissa, Greece) and the Folkuniversitetet (Kristianstad, Sweden).

Foreword

For young people, finding access to a vocational qualification or to the job market after leaving school poses a growing challenge. Particularly affected here are young people with a migrant background. Frequently they lack not only a formal qualification, but also knowledge of the local training system and the job market; they are affected by language problems and, in addition, often do not possess the necessary networks that can lead to a vocational qualification and employment.

Young people with a migrant background therefore require individualized support. A proven strategy in this context is to build on the youths' competencies. Because even without a formal or recognized vocational qualification or experience in the labor market, young adults acquire specialized, social and personal competencies. Particularly the "soft" skills are important in delivering solid work performance. For many vocational opportunities, the soft skills even define the most important components of the qualification.

Not only the young adults themselves, but also companies, vocational qualification bodies and job centers have difficulties recognizing and evaluating already-present skills and competencies. This is where competency assessment procedures come into play. They determine which competencies are present and which are not present - also in regard to the requirements of a certain vocational training path or a position in the job market.

The EU project "Discovering Competencies – Tools for your Future," in the context of which this guide came about, took up the goal of using competency assessment procedures to advance young people who are particularly disadvantaged in the job market. A focus was placed on young adults with a migrant background. The project was carried out between October 2010 and September 2012, taking place within the framework of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme as a Leonardo da Vinci Innovation Transfer Project.

The project's goals included the transfer of successful competency assessment procedures from Sweden, Denmark and Germany to Greece, where such procedures are largely unknown and should be implemented to the benefit of disadvantaged youth. For the German market, work was also completed toward the development of minimum quality standards for competency assessment procedures. The project result is presented in this Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies.

With the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies, a document has been created that should contribute first and foremost to **quality assurance in competency assessment procedures** and also defines, in addition to the general quality standards, action requirements for the planning and organization of such procedures. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies is a demanding and complex product that should provide various parties involved in the process of competency assessment with orientation and support, without the intent of limiting specific procedures in regard to content.

Against the background of already existing quality standards for competency assessment procedures, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies distinguishes itself through the following:

1. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies aims, in the spirit of the project goals, to make a specific contribution toward the **advancement of young adults with a migrant background**. It is therefore strongly focused on the peculiarities of assessing competencies for this target group.
2. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies is geared toward various target groups: both the providers and developers of competency assessment procedures and those who use the procedure results. To the benefit of disadvantaged youth it aims to aid the **intermediation and cooperation** between the various parties involved in the assessment procedures.
3. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies was intentionally designed to be applied and hereby primarily construed as a **tool for providers** of competency assessment procedures. It therefore contains, in addition to the theoretical explanations, detailed instructions for practical implementation.
4. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies also provides a documentation option, which can be used by procedure providers for internal evaluation or by users of the procedure results for external evaluation. Here the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies raises the claim to contribute to the standardization of documentation of implemented procedures, methods and tools.
5. In so far as the focus of the "Discovering Competencies" project was on the development of products and services for the Greek market, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies has been developed not only for the German market, but also specifically for the **needs of the Greek market**. The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies took into account the fact that competency assessment procedures in Greece are not common and (potential) providers of such procedures need support in the form of detailed instructions.

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Introduction

The **growing significance of orientation on individuals' skills** is currently one of the key challenges in the field of education and training. This is accompanied by the demand to assess professional decision making skills that have already been acquired and that must yet be acquired. The need to **measure and balance existing skills** has thus for many years been a part of the educational policy debate surrounding the development and implementation of the European Qualification Framework, the promotion of lifelong learning and the strengthening of self-activity and self-control of individuals.

In Germany, as in many other European countries, a number of **different approaches and forms of competency assessment** have been developed and established. The core component of such procedures is the precise and consistent description of competencies that includes all of the results of formal and informal learning. Competency assessment procedures are already applied in many different contexts: they go hand-in-hand, for example, with goals and content of learning opportunities or help with the assessment of demonstrated acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities of an individual. Overall, there have emerged various **areas of application** for the measuring of skills, such as assessment of learning conditions, creating learning paths, measuring of learning results and the promotion of the learners' self reflection.

In Germany, we're talking in this regard about a **specific institutional situation**. Unlike in other European countries such as Denmark or Sweden, skill assessment procedures in Germany are not state regulated or regimented, but organized beneath them on the basis of normative or standardized procedures. As a result, **various procedures of varying significance, validity, scope and function** have established themselves in Germany and been used by financial supporters and institutions. The differences in the procedures can be seen, for example, in regard to the areas of application, the forms of documentation, the personnel requirements, the forms of assessment and evaluation or the interaction with the participants. In the past, this has led to the development of a large number of other competency assessment procedures - in addition to established procedures such as the competence reflector², the career choice pass³ or the profile pass⁴ - the scope of which do not transcend an individual company⁵. Instruments and procedures were also developed and introduced within the framework of various federal and state projects for usage and application in specific areas. The differences in composition, structure and orientation on the one hand, plus the large number and diversity of the procedures on the other hand lead to a certain degree of ambiguousness and limit the impact and effects of competency assessment procedures.

This coincides with the fact that **hardly any universally binding guidelines or quality standards** exist for the introduction, implementation and evaluation of skill assessment procedures. This fact can

² See: <http://www.komnetz.de/index.php?id=167>

³ See: <http://www.berufswahlpass.de/>

⁴ See: <http://www.profilpass.de/>

⁵ See the Deutsche Bahn AG's procedure, see: GI EQUAL: "Instrumente der Kompetenzfeststellung zur Optimierung der beruflichen Integration von Migrantinnen und Migranten", Darmstadt 2007; and by the Deutsche Bank
http://www.deutsche-bank-stiftung.de/soziales_selbstbewusst_in_die_ausbildung_starten.html

limit the **quality** of the processes. Moreover, there is **little transparency** in regard to which procedures and (recognized) criteria were applied to achieve the results. As a consequence, it is frequently unclear exactly what the results of such a process mean and whence the results draw their validity. For the users of the procedure results, questions arise as to the relevance of the results and of what use the results of the skills assessment are.

The fact that the **competency assessment procedures** are generally **not self-evident** poses an additional challenge. Even the essential object of the process - competence - possesses no clarity per se: the concept of "competence" has in theory and in practice a range of varying meanings and cannot be pinned to a set value. Setting precise reference values and deriving from that the methodical approach is thus essential.

Objectives of the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies

The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies focuses on these problems. It aims to contribute to **strengthening the quality** of competency assessment procedures by teaching a structural, methodical approach; it also seeks to promote the **documentation** and **transparency** of such procedures. In this way the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies hopes to overall **strengthen** the **acceptance** and **standing** of competency assessment procedures and their results.

With specific objectives, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies is geared toward two target groups: toward both the providers and developers of competency assessment procedures and toward those who use the procedure results.

Target groups of the Guide	Target group 1 Organizations that develop or implement the competency assessment procedures	Target group 2 Organizations that use the competency assessment procedures
Primary objectives of the Guide on Discovering	Increase transparency with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the processes, methods and tools that produce the procedure results the informational value that the process results contain. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase in the quality of the processes of competency assessments by increasing the target and effect orientation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> greater comparability of different skill assessment processes
How the Guide on Discovering the Competencies helps attain objectives	As a form of support, both groups should be offered an overview and orientation in regard to requirements for high-quality competency assessment procedures.	
	<p>A guide on the systematic and quality-led planning, organization and implementation of competency assessment procedures is to be offered in order to optimize the process.</p> <p>The services for this target group are: → Orientation, instruction, documentation & self-evaluation</p>	<p>A guide for a test will be issued within the framework of which it can be determined to what extent expectations of skill assessment were considered in specific processes.</p> <p>The services for this target group are: → Orientation & external evaluation</p>
Products of the Guide on Discovering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general quality standards general instructions documentation booklet for self-evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> general quality standards general instructions documentation booklet for external evaluation

About Target Group 1

The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies is geared first and foremost toward providers, sponsors and companies that develop or provide competency assessment procedures. It focuses particularly on the challenges with which all **organizations** are confronted who provide **competency assessments for young adults with a migrant background**. Additionally, there is also information about competency assessment procedures in general.

In detail the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies should fulfill the following functions for the partial target groups listed below:

- For **providers, sponsors and companies who would like to offer competency assessments in the future**, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies provides the opportunity to review existing methods of

competency assessment for quality content. It provides **guidance** for making their own choice and for aptitude testing (see also Practical Guide Part A and B, as well as Appendix 1).

- For **providers, sponsors and companies who are in the process of developing their own competency assessment procedure**, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies provides a **qualitative justification for the implementation**. Optionally, it can be combined with a documentation form that shows aptitude and suitability of the procedures, methods and tools like on a self-evaluation (see Practical Guide Part A and B, as well as Appendix 1).
- For providers, sponsors and companies who **already** use skill assessments, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies provides the opportunity to review the **appropriateness of the procedure**. Yet another option is to combine it with a documentation form and, like a self-evaluation, help determine whether it meets the quality standards for such procedures (see Practical Guide Part A and B, as well as Appendix 1).

About Target Group 2

Additionally, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies is geared toward a second target group, namely **organizations that use the results of the procedures**; especially those organizations that work with young migrants. This includes, for example, client organizations, businesses, educational institutions and job centers. While the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies enables providers of competency assessment procedures to optimize used procedures, methods and tools up to certain quality standards, it can help the users of the procedure results to verify compliance with these quality standards. In addition, users of the procedure results can use the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies to run an **external evaluation** of the skill assessment procedure and in doing so determine whether a procedure is qualitatively justified and scientifically substantiated (see Practical Guide Part A and B, as well as Appendix 2).

Structure and Application of the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies

The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies includes - in addition to the actual guide, which is comprised of two parts - two additional appendices as follows:

Practical Guide	Part A: General Quality Standards
	Part B: General Instructions
Appendices	Appendix 1: Documentation Booklet I - Self-evaluation
	Appendix 2: Documentation Booklet II - External Evaluation

The **Practical Guide** is geared primarily toward all organizations that develop or implement competency assessment procedures, and secondly toward external users of the procedure results. It provides both target groups guidance on competency assessment procedure requirements. For procedure providers and developers, the guide is also a set of instructions on the systematic and quality-led organization of the procedure. Providers

can, step-by-step, use the information offered here to adjust their own procedure to the requirements set forth in the guide.

Regarding content, the practical guide focuses on the following questions:

- What is being measured?
- How is it being measured?
- Why is it being measured?

It is a two-part guide comprised of the following:

- a) **general quality standards** that should be used to achieve an optimal skill assessment procedure. These can be used both for selection and implementation as well as for the evaluation of competency assessment procedures (Part A). **general guidelines** regarding systematic work in competency assessment procedures. The instructions include descriptions of individual aspects of competency assessment, including its contents, methods and procedures. These, too, can be used both for selection and implementation, as well as for the evaluation of competency assessment procedures (Part B).

The guide was developed with special focus on the target group young adults with a migrant background. In addition to general explanations of the skills assessment process, it therefore contains specific information and statements that should be kept in mind for procedures with this target group.

Two documentation booklets are included with the practical guide as **appendices**. The documentation booklets are structured after the practical guide (general quality criteria and instructions). They provide space to describe the implementation of real methods in relation to them. The appendices serve not only the purpose of documentation but also the evaluation of competency assessment procedures.

Appendix 1 (Documentation Booklet I: **Self-evaluation**) is intended for all organizations that perform skill assessments and would like to reflect this. Since we are dealing with a self-evaluation, this document is primarily intended for internal use. It can, however, be used to demonstrate use of the procedure to external individuals - especially to those who use the procedure results.

Appendix 2 (Documentation Booklet II: **External Evaluation**) is intended for all organizations that are confronted with skill assessments and would like more information and/or would like to better understand the results of the procedures. These organizations can use Documentation Booklet II to help them gain understanding of the work performed by providers of skill assessments and request relevant information.

Practical Guide - Part A: General Quality Standards

Part A of the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies provides an overview of general quality standards for competency assessment procedures. It deals with generic and universally applicable standards that apply to all competency assessment procedures.

Organizations that develop or provide competency assessment procedures are to describe the standards in advance and then monitor them continually. They provide for the organizations that use the results of the procedures orientation on how a high-quality procedure should be designed. The quality standards follow the standards of the European Union for competency assessment procedures.⁶

Like a practical orientation, the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies - General Quality Standards provides the following elements:

- the definition of relevant **quality standards**,
- further **explanations and examples** that should make applying the criteria in practice easier,
- the special requirements posed by the target group of young adults with a **migration background**.

The quality standards that should be taken into consideration, and are described in detail below, are:

1. Quality criteria in regard to procedure implementation
2. Quality criteria in regard to the methods
3. Quality criteria in regard to documentation requirements
4. Quality criteria in regard to usefulness
5. Quality criteria that are especially relevant for the target group of young adults with a migrant background

⁶ Competency assessments, according to the aforementioned standards, should "follow the principles of confidentiality, impartiality, justice and transparency." Council of the European Union: draft of the conclusions by the council and its united representatives of the governments of the member states on common European principles for the measuring and validation of not-formal and informal learning processes, (19.05)(OR. en) 9600/04 LIMITE EDUC 118, SOC 253. Brussels 18.05.2004, P. 5

1. Quality criteria in regard to the procedure implementation

Voluntary assessment

Competency assessment procedures should generally be a service offered under no obligation, otherwise it is not possible to have an environment with trust and openness, which is of utmost importance for this sort of process. In this context it should be ensured that:

- there are no sanctions for not participating.

Data protection

Confidentiality in regard to the shared information that is part of a skill assessment process constitutes a fundamental requirement for an atmosphere of trust. In this context it should therefore be ensured that:

- an agreement is made that prohibits the sharing of information and data with third parties without permission from the participant.

Authenticity

Competency assessment procedures must ensure that the result is in fact based on the performance of the participant. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- mechanisms exist to ensure that, for example, a test or a work sample was in fact completed by the participants themselves.
- in the case of oral submissions, something handwritten is also submitted for verification purposes.

Quality assurance measures

Success and acceptance of a competency assessment procedure depend largely on the execution of quality assurance measures. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- appropriate quality assurance measures are identified; for example, an internal audit or an external, independent observation,
- transparent policies and procedures are in place to continuously ensure the appropriateness of the applied methods and the procedure's design as well as the validity, reliability and objectivity of the procedure,
- contracts exist for the acquisition of recognized methods,
- self-developed methods and instruments are described and documented, for example, in the form of handbooks, interview and evaluation guides, observation schedules or descriptions of real-life examples,
- information can be generated on quantitative data such as the number of participants or of staff members,
- the staff is sufficiently qualified, undergoes continued training that is properly certified (including, where applicable, a description of the learning content and methods),
- the entire process of competency assessment undergoes a final success and effect analysis, which bears consequences for improvements and enhancements,
- ideally the perspective of the participants will be taken into consideration,

Gender mainstreaming

In the spirit of gender equality, competency assessment procedures should assume a gender-sensitive perspective. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- Gender mainstreaming is firmly established in the organization's mission statement
- different interests and life situations of women and men, as well as role-typical behavior in the selection process of the methods and instruments to be used in the procedure are taken into

consideration throughout the entire process.

2. Quality criteria in regard to methods

Validity

The validity of a competency assessment procedure refers to what extent it actually measures what it sets out to measure. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- the applied procedure is appropriate for the context and purpose,
- all competencies and competence attributes relevant to reaching the goal are identified and assessed,
- a close relation exists between the competency assessment procedure and the results,
- the evaluation process takes place without concrete ideas of the outcome, and the process is open to any results

Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree of accuracy and reliability with which a competence attribute is measured. The results of a competency assessment procedure should be comprehensible and consistent; the same results should be produced under altered conditions or in the presence of an observer. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- solid, tested and well-described methods are applied,
- preferably standardized methods and instruments are applied,
- defined processes, methods and instruments are applied systematically,
- staff members are trained and offered continuing education/training systematically.

Objectivity

Objectivity refers to the independence of the results of a competency assessment procedure from the person who performed the procedure. In this context it should be ensured that:

- no interpretations find their way into the evaluation, but only perceptions that have been recorded in a log.

3. Quality criteria in regard to documentation requirements

Certification

The result of a competency assessment should always be certified in a written record - in the form of a document or report - so that it can be used appropriately by the participant and made readily available for third parties. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- duration, contents and results of the assessment are recorded,
- the certificate includes statements making reference to completed qualifications, (partial) qualifications, vocational experience and to the participant's competencies measured (formally or informally acquired) in the procedure,
- Statements are made regarding any needs for remedial work, funding recommendations and opportunities for development in order to enable sensible interventions,
- especially for the target group of migrants, qualifications acquired in the home country are taken into account and recognition of foreign educational and vocational qualifications are clarified,
- the form of the certificate is appropriate for further use.

Transparency

The success of a competency assessment procedure depends largely on the participants having an optimal chance to understand what will happen in this context. Procedures and results of a competency assessment should always be comprehensible for the participants, as they will otherwise neither be accepted nor used. Providers of competency assessment procedures are requested to establish the appropriate amount and level of transparency. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- minimal requirements regarding the providing of information are defined in advance to the participants,
- generally every attempt should be made to achieve the highest degree of openness and clarity toward the participants,
- for the participants of the competency assessment procedure, transparency exists in regard to operating procedures, central concepts (such as "competence" or certain competence attributes) and usage, applicability and validity of the results,
- the participants are informed about the objectives, meaning, opportunities, limitations and risks of the procedure,
- ideally before the individual decision is made on whether or not to participate, an initial interview takes place with the participant in which the aforementioned items are discussed,
- following the initial interview constant feedback is offered throughout the process and an evaluative conversation takes place at the end of the process,
- the participants are issued a certificate or attestation of participation that includes the procedure results,
- the participants are provided the opportunity to appeal the results of a competency assessment procedure.

4. Quality criteria in regard to usefulness

Applicability

Competency assessment procedures should be applicable, i.e., generally useful for the participants and also, in some instances, for third parties (for example, for educational institutions, companies and job centers). In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- the objectives of the skills assessment are known to all parties involved,
- the process is designed in such a way that it produces usable results in accordance with the objectives,
- results are delivered on the basis of which further counseling, qualification or vocational integration can take place,
- ideally, collaboration with those organizations active in the job market will take place so that the process can also find actual acceptance in the job market,
- the results are documented in the form of an evaluation or a recommendation,
- the documentation is designed in such a way that it a.) is generally understandable, b.) is formulated with the already defined occupational or qualification goal in mind, c.) is useful for third parties, i.e., it names process modules, qualification levels or test levels.

5. Quality criteria that are especially relevant for the target group of young adults with a migrant background

Language and intelligibility

Linguistic applicability within the framework of the competency assessment process is crucial for successful

participation. While the structured usage of a language that is understood by the participants should be ensured for all target groups, this is especially applicable for the target group of migrants. Skill assessment with individuals with a migrant background poses the risk that the usage of language beyond the participant's language skill level will unintentionally result in language skill assessment instead of technical or social skill assessment. In this context it should therefore be ensured that:

- the language proficiency level of the participant is determined early on, ideally using a standardized test (the model should be the six proficiency levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.),
- the language requirements of instruments to be used in the skill assessment are determined early on,
- the procedures, methods and tools to be used, as well as all tasks the participant will be given, are to be adjusted in accordance with the language proficiency level of the participants,
- need for linguistic support is identified early on in order to guarantee successful participation in professional development courses and integration into the job market
- formulations correlating to the linguistic level of the participants are used to produce throughout the entire process the highest possible linguistic transparency,
- participants are offered throughout the entire process language assistance that matches their language proficiency level, for example by:
 - using simple and clear formulations and avoiding complex concepts both in oral and written communication,
 - alternatively creating / translating a glossary for complex terms and concepts,
 - using an adapted form of speaking: clear articulation, slow speech, accompanying facial expressions and gestures,
 - using native language support in the form of translations, interpreters and providing other information in the native language (flyers, etc.), dictionaries, using native language partners,
 - using methods and instruments that are free of language, for example by visualization of subject content,
 - implementing a dialogical principle that offers space and (additional) time for inquiries and clarification of misunderstandings, and also ensures that every task was properly understood without possibly reproaching the participant.

Empowerment

Empowerment refers to the increase of autonomy, self-determination and personal responsibility of the participants of a competency assessment procedure. For young people with a migrant background, empowerment can be especially relevant. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- the participants are actively involved in the entire process of skill assessment by, for example, identifying their own needs and requirements, asking them to perform self-assessments or involving them in the evaluation process of the procedure results,
- individual feedback conversations take place with the participants during and upon conclusion of the procedure,
- the procedure is structured in a way that it is understood by the participants as a genuine offer for designing their own career and life path, and the participants are convinced of its potential meaning in defining their own future.

Inclusion

Competency assessment procedures should generally be adapted to the particular needs of the individual participants and the target group, i.e., they must be sufficiently flexible and versatile. In the case of young people with a migrant background, this aspect takes on a new dimension. Especially important here is that differences are taken into consideration, as well as "diversity management," recognizing diversity, which will

enable the participants to be a part of society. In this context, every effort should be made to ensure that:

- diversity management is firmly established in the organization's mission statement,
- diversity management is specifically taken into account in the selection process of the procedure methods and instruments,
- formal and informal qualifications earned in the home country are acknowledged for their value and receive formal recognition,
- competency assessment procedures are selected in a way that they consciously take into account the language, origin, culture, religion and lifestyle of the participants,
- the staff, if possible, is multi-cultural.

Practical Guide - Part B: General Instructions

Part B of the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies provides an overview of general instructions for competency assessment.

The instructions describe an **ideal planning and organizational process for competency assessment procedures**, which can help with systematic preparation, selection, rationale, application, evaluation and reflection of such procedures. The instructions are applicable to all procedures. The accompanying **sets of questions** are the core of the instructions. Organizations that develop or use competency assessment procedures can use the question sets to ensure they are planning an optimal procedure by responding to the question sets for their respective procedure in accordance with their specific organization's objectives. For organizations that use the results of the procedures, the instructions provide orientation on how a high-quality procedure should be planned and organized, and which arrangements should be made within this framework.

The Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies - General Instructions contains the following elements:

- different **items** in this context that should be taken into consideration,
- a list of relevant **questions** that should be answered for each item,
- **explanations and examples** for each item for the purpose of clarity,
- the special requirements posed by the target group of **young adults with a migration background**.

The related questions that should be taken into consideration, and are described in detail below, are:

1. What do I want to accomplish?	Objective of the competency assessment procedure
2. For whom do I want to accomplish something?	Definition of the procedure's target group
3. What is the focus of the procedure?	Item: Our definition of competence
4. What demands and expectations are placed on the facility?	Contextual conditions and facilities
5. What demands and expectations are placed on the staff?	Staff, qualifications and competencies
6. Specifically, how will the item be carried out and measured?	Regulations, processes, methods and instruments
7. How will the collected information be documented?	Documentation and verification

What do I want to accomplish?

Objective of the competency assessment procedure

Questions for the assessors

Competency assessment procedures can pursue various objectives. So that the competency assessment is useful to the participants, the competency assessment procedures must have clear, pre-defined objectives. In this context the following must therefore be clarified:

- What exactly should the competency assessment procedure accomplish?
- What real results does the competency assessment procedure strive to attain?

Result

The objectives of the competency assessment procedure are defined in the result of this step.

Explanations and examples

Sample goals for the competency assessment procedure are:

- systematic collection of competencies, technical skills and qualifications,
- comparison of the individual competencies and certain demands of the working world,
- certification of technical skills and informally acquired competencies,
- support and guidance in orientation to a profession, i.e., educational and career planning
- strengthening of professional employability,
- strengthening of autonomy, self-confidence and personal responsibility,
- recommendations for additional qualifications and financial assistance opportunities.

Unique to the target group migrants

Competency assessment procedures for young people with a migrant background should include personal strengths, potential and resources, taking cultural aspects into consideration. An important goal here should be the inclusion of competencies that were informally acquired in the home country (e.g., in the framework of professional experience). Language competencies (German skills, foreign languages) should also be included.

For whom do I want to accomplish something?

Target group

Questions for the assessors

Competency assessment procedures can be geared toward widely differing target groups. Since the target group has significant consequences for the substantive orientation of the procedure, it is important that clarity about the target group is established early on. In this context the following must therefore be clarified:

- For whom exactly should the above goals be met via your competency assessment?
- How will the target group be taken into account in the design and implementation of the procedure?
- How homogenous or heterogeneous is the target group and what

	<p>consequences does this fact have on the procedure design?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to your definition, which prerequisites do the participants have to fulfill in order to participate? How do you assess and test these prerequisites? What happens with the participants who do not fulfill the prerequisites?
<p>Result</p>	<p>The target group(s) of the competency assessment procedure is/are defined in the result of this step.</p>
<p>Explanations and examples</p>	<p>Competency assessment procedures should generally be applied to target groups that are relatively homogeneous since they otherwise do not make a good fit and do not correspond to the needs of the target group.</p>
<p>Unique to the target group migrants</p>	<p>For competency assessments of young people with a migrant background, target group sensitivity is of utmost importance, and cultural aspects should be given special attention. It is also recommended to add advising on the recognition of foreign qualifications, vocational advising and options for subsequent vocational training to the competency assessment.</p> <p>It should also be noted that the target group "persons with a migrant background" can be very heterogeneous in regard to cultural, social and educational backgrounds. Instead of using general-purpose procedures for this target group, assessors should check to ensure which (different) procedures best serve which groups of people.</p>
<p>What is the focus of the procedure? Item: Our definition of competence</p>	
<p>Questions for the assessors</p>	<p>The concept of "competence" is complex and there is no exact consensus on its usage. Therefore a precise conceptual definition on different abstraction levels is indispensable. The following must be clarified first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does competence mean to you in the given context? • Which skill areas are included and analyzed in your procedure? • How do you define the skill areas? • In the given context, which specific skill traits are relevant and undergo analysis? • How do you define the skill traits? • What indicators help you to determine whether or not a certain skill trait is present?
<p>Result</p>	<p>All key concepts are defined and operationalized in the result of this step. The relevant skill areas are limited. It is crucial that the chosen definition of "competence" progresses throughout the course of the operationalization from an abstract to a detailed level, on which specifically named skill traits can be observed, measured and, if applicable, scaled. A clear and consistent understanding of "competence" exists among all participants.</p>
<p>Explanations and examples</p>	<p>To a large extent, the central skill areas (which can be supplemented by additional ones) are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional competence • Methodological competencies • Social competencies

<p>Unique to the target group migrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal competencies <p>Generally, formal and informal competencies should be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Examples of competence traits are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work in a team • Communication skills • Openness to criticism • Linguistic competence • Cross-cultural competence • Emotional intelligence • Diligence • Flexibility • Empathy • Responsibility <p>Competency assessments on young people with a migrant background should be sure to include multilingualism as a skill. Migration itself is frequently associated with the (informal) acquisition of skills, which should be investigated.</p>
<p>What demands and expectations are placed on the facility?</p> <p>Contextual conditions and facilities</p>	
<p>Questions for the assessors</p>	<p>The equipment and facilities are also important. In this context the following should be clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the needs in regard to space and equipment in order to carry out your procedure(s)? • How do you utilize your space? What sort of atmosphere would you like? • What materials are needed and what materials are present?
<p>Result</p>	<p>Needs in regard to equipment and facilities are explained in the result of this step.</p>
<p>Explanations and examples</p>	<p>Factors in this context include, for example, producing an atmosphere of confidentiality. External disturbance factors such as telephone, passing foot traffic, etc. should also be avoided.</p>
<p>Unique to the target group migrants</p>	<p>Facilities should also have dictionaries or other aids for translation.</p>
<p>What demands and expectations are placed on the staff?</p> <p>Staff</p>	
<p>Questions for the assessors</p>	<p>The targeted use of staff for competency assessment procedures is vital. The following must be clarified first:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which staff member(s) administer(s) the competency assessment? • What demands do you place on the staff in order to reach the goals / target groups mentioned above, and to assess their competence in accordance with the above?

<p>Result</p>	<p>Staff needs and demands / qualifications have been determined in the result of this step.</p>
<p>Explanations and examples</p>	<p>Demands and expectations placed on the staff can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of expertise and methodological competence • experience with the target group • pedagogical / psychological or related qualification • several years of experience administering competency assessment procedures • counseling skills and, if possible, training as an observer • sound knowledge of the related training and job market • ideally a formal qualification in competency assessment <p>Demands and expectations to which the organization is committed in regard to its staff may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional training (pre- and/or continued) for the staff. Training should be certified and include information about the competency assessment procedure, training methods and content and the number of hours the training encompassed. • case discussions, collegial reflection, supervision • license for testing
<p>Unique to the target group migrants</p>	<p>Work with the target group of young adults with a migration background poses special demands on the staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross-cultural competencies • knowledge of migration biographies • ideally, a staff that is multi-cultural • specialized training for the administration of competency assessment procedures for this target group • in some instances an interpreter should be made available.
<p>How will the item be measured?</p>	
<p>Processes, Methods & Tools</p>	
<p>Questions for the assessors</p>	<p>There exists a very broad range of processes, methods and tools that can be used as part of competency assessment procedures. It is therefore crucial that concrete decisions on methodology are made in advance. The following should be determined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you ensure that competencies are measured objectively? • Which processes / methods / tools do you use? Why do you consider these processes / methods / tools suitable for measuring competence as outlined above? • Are the procedures / methods / tools adapted to the objectives, the target group and the institutional framework? • How do you ensure the scientific quality of the methods? • Are the tools you are applying standardized, field-tested and evaluated? Is there openness regarding any new tools or tools that have to date only

	<p>undergone little testing? Who determines new methods (clarification of responsibilities)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the procedure encompass and how long does it take? • With which scientific (possibly standardized) methods are the data and information gathered during the procedure analyzed? • Are written explanations on procedures, methods and tools being developed?
<p>Result</p>	<p>In the result of this step it has been determined how competency assessment procedures are organized and which procedures, methods and tools are used.</p>
<p>Remarks, explanations</p>	<p>The procedure should include a chronological description of the what is done. An example of a multiple-phase model for competency assessment is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preliminary interview and consultation including explanation of what happens throughout the procedure on both ends (assessors and participants), opportunities, risks and a final agreement on objectives 2. Competency assessment 3. Recognition of competencies 4. Objective verification (comparison with agreements on objectives), final feedback and, in some cases, advising on how to proceed 5. Documentation of competencies <p>The procedure includes a decision on whether only a competency snapshot should be provided, or if longer-term, systematic guidance and result documentation should take place.</p> <p>In this context it should also be clarified to what extent other, external organizations, partners and assessors are to be included in the procedure or if an internal tutor should be used for counseling and support of the participants.</p> <p>Methodological options in competency assessment procedures can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group or individual work • self-assessment or assessment by others. Assessment by others can be performed by counselors, a tutor or also by other participants in the competency assessment procedure. Individuals outside of the actual competency assessment procedure can also be included as supervisors or mentors in the workplace. <p>The following are typical tools that can be used as part of the competency assessment procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual or group discussions • (semi-) structured interviews • role playing • written and oral assignments • practical exercises and assignments • test procedures (for example, IT-based tests) • profiling • analyses of potential • assessment center

<p>Unique to the target group migrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work samples <p>A component of many procedures is the observation of the participants. In this context the following should be clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • general observation principles ("first observe, then take notes," etc.) • demands and expectations on the observers • required number of observers and, if applicable, rotation of the observers • creation and explanation of an observer sheet • explanation of observational errors <p>In the context of methodological considerations on the analysis of information, two aspects must ultimately be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be a plan for the methodical analysis of the information and data collected. The staff should be familiar with the plan. • The plan should include controls that exclude individual interpretations in favor of objective methods. <p>It is of utmost importance that the language proficiency level of the participants is taken into consideration when deciding on methods and instruments; it is recommended to use methods that do not place a language burden on the participant, if possible using practical elements.</p>
<p>How will the collected information be documented?</p> <p>Documentation</p>	
<p>Questions for the assessors</p>	<p>The documentation of the process and the results is crucial for meeting requirements toward objectivity, transparency and the ability to make the results useful for third parties. Therefore the following must be clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With which scientific (possibly standardized) methods are the data and information gathered during the procedure documented? • How do you document information in a way that it can sensibly and reliably be analyzed later?
<p>Result</p>	<p>In the result of this step it has been determined how results are documented during the procedure.</p>
<p>Explanations and examples</p>	<p>There are recognized, standardized documentation procedures that can be used for inspiration.⁷</p>

⁷ See "My Competence Portfolio" www.uvm.dk, "Certificate – Summary of the Results of the Determination of Potential" (see "Toolbox", <http://www.discovering-competencies.eu/de/products-2/>), „Transversal competency assessment in the workplace or in the context of training/education“ (see "Toolbox," <http://www.discovering-competencies.eu/de/products-2/>.)

Appendix 1 - Documentation Booklet I Self-evaluation

- For organizations that administer competency assessment procedures -

Documentation Booklet I: Self-evaluation is intended for all organizations that would like to administer skill assessments in the future, or that already administer them and would like to reflect this. The booklet is filled out by these organizations.

Documentation Booklet I is the appropriate tool for organizations that do not yet have a fully structural and quality-led approach or that do not have documentation on the subject. It can be used to record:

- whether and in what way the **general quality standards** (outlined in the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies, Part A) of a competency test procedure were taken into account,
- whether and in what way the **general instructions** (outlined in the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies, Part B) of a competency test procedure were taken into account,

In a further step, Documentation Booklet I can serve the guided self-evaluation of procedures and processes. In this sense, Documentation Booklet I is intended primarily for internal usage for purposes of quality assurance in organizations that provide skill assessments.

Generally speaking, however, Documentation Booklet I can be used **to demonstrate use of the procedure** to external individuals - especially to those who use the procedure results. The advantage to this detailed form of documentation is that procedure result users can better understand how the results were attained and consequently what they actually mean. Thus it is conceivable that Documentation Booklet I will routinely be completed and forwarded for reasons of procedural transparency, either as part of standard procedure or per request. Here a balance could be found between the need for transparency in administering assessments and the need to protect an organization's confidential know-how from external abuse.

Documentation Booklet I is structurally and logically modeled after the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies. The Practical Guide should therefore be used as a reference and a source of information and inspiration for extra support when filling out the Documentation Booklet.

The documentation should be completed in a concise and precise manner. It should be adequately informative so that it can actually be used by the provider in the spirit of an accurate self-evaluation or to convey to external parties a compelling picture of the procedures and methods.

Part A: General Quality Standards

General Quality Standards

Please place a mark next to each quality standard that was incorporated in your competency assessment procedure (proof thereof to be provided in Documentation Booklet I, Part B).

Voluntary assessment

Competency assessment procedures should be a service offered and in no way obligatory for the participants.

Data protection

Information provided in the course of a competency assessment process must be treated confidentially and may not be shared with third parties without the participants' consent.

Authenticity

Competency assessment procedures must ensure that the result is in fact based on the performance of the participant.

Quality assurance measures

Competency assessment procedures must undergo quality assurance procedures.

Gender mainstreaming

Competency assessment procedures must act in the interest of gender equality, taking into account the different interests and life situations of women and men.

Validity

The competency assessment procedure must ensure validity (to what extent it actually measures what it sets out to measure).

Reliability

The reliability, i.e., the degree of precision and consistency of the competency assessment procedure must be ensured (under altered conditions / assessors must arrive at the same results).

Objectivity

Objectivity, i.e., the independence of the results of a competency assessment procedure from the person who performed the procedure, must be ensured.

Certification

The competency assessment must always be certified in writing.

Transparency

Procedures and results of a competency assessment must be comprehensible and, in this sense, not difficult for the participants to follow.

Applicability

Competency assessment procedures must be concretely useful for the participants and also for third parties if applicable (companies, educational institutions, job centers).

Language and intelligibility

Competency assessment procedures must be adapted to the language proficiency level of the participants and, in this sense, not difficult for the participants to understand.

Empowerment

The principle of empowerment, i.e., the increase of autonomy, self-determination and personal responsibility of the participants, must be taken into account throughout the course of a competency assessment procedure.

Inclusion

Competency assessment procedures must be adapted to the particular needs of the participants / the target group in the sense of "managing diversity" and they must recognize diversity.

Part B: General Instructions

General Instructions

Please provide a response to the following questions. Please provide proof as to how the general quality standards (see Documentation Booklet I, Part A) were met.

What do I want to accomplish?

Objective of our competency assessment procedure

Self-assessment

For whom do I want to accomplish something?

Target group

Self-assessment

What is the focus of the procedure?

Item: Our definition of competence

Self-assessment

What demands and expectations are placed on the facility?

Contextual conditions and facilities

Self-assessment

What demands and expectations are placed on the staff?

Staff

Self-assessment

How will the item be measured?

Processes, Methods & Tools

Self-assessment

How will the collected information be documented?

Documentation

Self-assessment

Appendix 2 - Documentation Booklet II: External Evaluation

- For organizations that use the results of competency assessment procedures -

Documentation Booklet II: External evaluation is intended for all organizations that do not administer competency assessments themselves but would like to use their results and better understand them. This can be, for example, businesses, educational institutions and job centers.

The following scenarios would be possible applications:

- Documentation Booklet II can be used **prior to a competency assessment** in order to communicate basic expectations of the procedure to the organization administering the procedure. In other words, before a young person undergoes a competency assessment, an exchange takes place via the Documentation Booklet between the user of the results and the organization administering the procedure. So quality requirements are clarified in advance. Upon completion of the competency assessment, Documentation Booklet II is filled out by the procedure provider and forwarded to the results user.
- Documentation Booklet II can also be used **following a competency assessment** in order to obtain information about the procedure and to better understand the results. This means that the exchange between the user of the results and the organization administering the procedure takes place ex post facto. In this case, Documentation Booklet II is sent to the procedure provider as a request and returned once it is filled out.

In both cases, the request for information about the procedure stems from the organization using the results. Documentation Booklet II is filled out by the procedure provider upon request. At the end of the booklet, space is provided for additional comments by the user.

Information communicated via Documentation Booklet II is structurally and logically modeled after the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies. For requests to procedure providers, Documentation Booklet II should hence always be included as a reference and used by providers as support information and inspirational material.

The following information can be exchanged via Documentation Booklet II:

- whether and in what way the **general quality standards** (outlined in the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies, Part A) of a competency test procedure were taken into account,
- whether and in what way the **general instructions** (outlined in the Practical Guide on Discovering Competencies, Part B) of a competency test procedure were taken into account,

Collaboration between the provider and the user of competency assessment procedure should. The provider must be able to decide freely how much transparency to allow in regard to his procedures and where he must protect his organization's internal know-how from external abuse.

The documentation should be completed in a concise and precise manner. The documentation should be adequately informative so that it conveys to the user of the procedure results a compelling picture of the procedures and methods.

Part A: General Quality Standards

General Quality Standards

Providers of competency assessment procedures: Please place a mark next to each quality standard that was incorporated in your competency assessment procedure (proof thereof to be provided in Documentation Booklet I, Part B).

Voluntary assessment

Competency assessment procedures should be a service offered and in no way obligatory for the participants.

Data protection

Information provided in the course of a competency assessment process must be treated confidentially and may not be shared with third parties without the participants' consent.

Authenticity

Competency assessment procedures must ensure that the result is in fact based on the performance of the participant.

Quality assurance measures

Competency assessment procedures must undergo quality assurance procedures.

Gender mainstreaming

Competency assessment procedures must act in the interest of gender equality, taking into account the different interests and life situations of women and men.

Validity

The competency assessment procedure must ensure validity (to what extent it actually measures what it sets out to measure).

Reliability

The reliability, i.e., the degree of precision and consistency of the competency assessment procedure must be ensured (under altered conditions / assessors must arrive at the same results).

Objectivity

Objectivity, i.e., the independence of the results of a competency assessment procedure from the person who performed the procedure, must be ensured.

Certification

The competency assessment must always be certified in writing.

Transparency

Procedures and results of a competency assessment must be comprehensible and, in this sense, not difficult for the participants to follow.

Applicability

Competency assessment procedures must be concretely useful for the participants and also for third

parties if applicable (companies, educational institutions, job centers).

Language and intelligibility

Competency assessment procedures must be adapted to the language proficiency level of the participants and, in this sense, not difficult for the participants to understand.

Empowerment

The principle of empowerment, i.e., the increase of autonomy, self-determination and personal responsibility of the participants, must be taken into account throughout the course of a competency assessment procedure.

Inclusion

Competency assessment procedures must be adapted to the particular needs of the participants / the target group in the sense of “managing diversity” and they must recognize diversity.

Part B: General Instructions

General Instructions

Providers of competency assessment procedures: Please provide a response to the following questions. Please provide proof as to how the general quality standards (see Documentation Booklet I, Part A) were met.

What do I want to accomplish?

Objective of our competency assessment procedure

Response
(must be completed by the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks
(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

For whom do I want to accomplish something?

Target group

Response
(must be completed by the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks
(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

What is the focus of the procedure?

Item: Our definition of competence

Response
(must be completed by

the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks

(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

What demands and expectations are placed on the facility?

Contextual conditions and facilities

Response

(must be completed by the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks

(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

What demands and expectations are placed on the staff?

Staff

Response

(must be completed by the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks

(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

How will the item be measured?

Processes, Methods & Tools

Response

(must be completed by the organization that

administered the competency assessment)

Remarks

(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

How will the collected information be documented?

Documentation

Response

(must be completed by the organization that administered the competency assessment)

Remarks

(if applicable, to be completed by the organization that requested the external evaluation)

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