

An overview of the development of the Competency Framework for the VETBA Project

Methodology

The Competency Framework used in this project was developed using the DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) methodology, developed by the Center on Education and Training for Employment, Ohio State University, US. The method involves the analysis of a job by a trained DACUM facilitator and a panel of expert workers to identify, very precisely, the duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, worker behaviours, tools, equipment, future trends and concerns of that job. The analysis is then validated.

DACUM is based on three logical premises:

- 1. Expert workers can describe and define their job or occupation more accurately than anyone else.*
- 2. An effective way to define a job or occupation is to precisely describe the tasks that expert workers perform.*
- 3. All tasks, in order to be performed correctly, demand the certain knowledge/skills, tools and positive worker behaviours.¹*

This methodology is recognised in the United States as being one of the most effective and highest quality processes available and is being used increasingly by both the business and education sectors in Asia and Europe. Its advantages include the maximisation of group collaboration to complete the analysis: the sharing of ideas, energising brainstorming sessions, empowerment and consensus. Another important outcome is the buy-in that comes from employers, employees and learners. The process is also ISO compliant.

The VETBA Competency Framework Process

A group of 10 Business Advisors worked with a trained DACUM facilitator in Dundalk Institute of Technology, Ireland, for 2 days in March 2011. The team analysed the job of the Business Advisor and identified the duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, worker behaviours, tools, equipment as well as future trends and concerns associated with the position. A preliminary draft of the Competency Framework was prepared.

These findings were then used to develop a questionnaire on Survey Monkey which was distributed to the Business Advisors listed on the databases of the VETBA partners in the UK, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Belgium and Ireland. Respondents were asked to state a) whether or not they carried out the duty and related tasks, b) whether or not they considered the tasks important and c) how difficult they found the tasks to learn. Respondents were also invited to add comments or information.

The results of this survey allowed the team to refine the competency framework and identify where training was needed. These results were cross checked with the results of Training Needs Analysis produced by the University of Szczecin in Poland and were deemed compatible.

The Training Programme

Both the Training Needs Analysis and the development of the Competency Framework have demonstrated that learning at a high level is needed. By this, the design team are referring to the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy of Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation.² Therefore, using (a) very precise learning objectives very specifically linked to the Competency Framework, and (b) methodologies suitable for self-study, the following modules were developed :

Managing My Own Learning

How to Write a Case Study

Business Coaching

Business Strategy

Marketing

How to review Cashflows and Financial Projections

Business Plan Evaluation

The modules enable the learners to develop their expertise, either alone, with a study-buddy or a group of colleagues, in the defined areas with a view to applying their learning on-the-job immediately.

References:

1. Norton, R., Moser, J., (2008) DACUM Handbook. 3rd Edn. Ohio. Center on Education and Training for Employment, Ohio State University.
2. Bloom, B.S., Krathwohl, D. R., Masia, B. B., (1965). Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Longman.