Competency-based Assessment in Nova Scotia – The Way Forward

A PROJECT OF THE

NOVA SCOTIA
Labour and Advanced Education

&

nscc
Overview:
Over the next 10 years, recruiting new employees who bring the same qualifications, training and credentials that exist in our current workforce will be a challenge for many Nova Scotia employers. Faced with this skills shortage, many organizations are adopting a competency based assessment approach which brings a greater focus on identifying what individuals know, and can do, to determine if they have the competencies required to be successful in an occupation.

Presenters:

• **Diane Gordon** NS Department of Labour and Advanced Education

• **Clarence DeSchiffart**, Facilitator, Competency Assessment Training & Coordinator Career and Essential Skills Services -- Nova Scotia Community College
Nova Scotia RPL Framework 2009 - Goals

- Leadership in RPL
- Build RPL Services within the provincial government
- Build RPL Capacity outside the provincial government
- Quality Assurance and Evaluation
- Build Awareness of RPL
RPL and Labour Mobility

• RPL Unit created in September 2011

• Main focus has been to create competency assessment tools for; lower level learners; internationally educated professionals; and emerging occupations and certification regimes.

• RPL Environmental Scan – 2010

• Recommendation: to support the current trend toward competency assessment and multiple assessment processes.
RPL in Nova Scotia

- Undertook a number of initiatives with organizations.
- Wanted to ensure the occupations we worked with had access to a quality/standardized training for assessors.
- Much was being done on an ad-hoc basis with difference consultants recommending difference approaches.
- Some assessments focused solely on producing and assessing a portfolio.
- Working with the NSCC to ensure we have the quality needed for this level of risk.
One Challenge
Under the RPL Umbrella: Distinctions

Prior Learning And Recognition (PLAR)

• “a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning (i.e. skills, knowledge and values).”

• Does not use specific industry standards

Competency Assessment

• Focuses on measuring and making judgments about whether an individual’s actual skills and knowledge can be used in particular work environments (OPS).

• *Occupational Performance Standards* (OPS) for that industry that contain measurable, observable competencies.
Discussion

In small groups discuss:

• Your experience of Competency Assessment Training
• What were/might be some of the challenges in Canada for a competency assessment program?
• What would you like to see embedded in a quality Competency Assessment training program?
Other Challenges

• Applicants applying and there is not a current Occupational Performance Standard or a other standard that contains measureable observable criteria

• Competencies of the Competency Assessors
  – Organizations that don’t have appropriate criteria for selecting subject matter experts to employ or designate as assessors.
• Looked at programs in:
  – Canada, Australia, South Wales, New Zealand
  – What was common?
  – What was unique?
Competency Assessment Process

1. Determining
   Identify and affirm desire and capacity to under-take competency assessment

2. Planning
   Identify/examine requirements for the work and competency assessment

3. Gather Evidence
   Compile and submit evidence of competencies that address occupational standards Identify / examine requirements

4. Evaluation and Decision Making
   Evidence evaluated by competency assessor

5. Next Steps
   Assessor and candidate review results. Offer suggestions/statement of completion

Candidate and assessor exchange feedback. Acknowledge self-awareness & circumstances
Overview of NSCC

- In Class -- 6 days total
  - Looks like: 2 days 4 weeks with home assignment
  - 2 days 4 weeks with home assignment
  - 2 days with final evaluation

- Practicum:
  - Assess two candidates within a 6 month period using at least 4 assessment methods

- Future:
  - PLAR competency assessor competencies
  - On line and on site training combination
What do assessors really do?

- Decide what they are qualified to assess
- Develop tools to assist them with the assessment process
  - checklists, written assessments, performance criteria,
- Work with others to develop acceptable evidence
- Set assessment criteria
- Assess candidate’s evidence
- Ensure evidence meets Evidence Guidelines
- Develops initial assessment plan
- Communicates with candidate and gives feedback
- Make recommendations about meeting OPS or not
- Provides support to others connect to assessment
- Maintain records
- Meet with other assessors to review quality assurance of the assessments (moderation)
Evaluation of Learning

Regarding the competencies of a Competency Assessor, and knowing what you know now, how would you rate yourself before the course, and how would you rate yourself now?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Course</th>
<th>Ave</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Ave</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0  1  2  3  4
## Evaluation of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Av</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>Av</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and use occupational standards in designing learning outcomes or performance expectations</td>
<td>0 1 2 9 0 1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0 0 1 10 2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure competency assessment criteria are transparent</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State criteria for a competency assessment</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize equivalent learning</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate in the development of an assessment plan</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Evaluation of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Score 1</th>
<th>Score 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use a variety of assessment methods and tools</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review evidence with the individual</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verify authenticity of evidence</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validate evidence</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apply assessment criteria</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assess to level of competence for the standard(s) of performance for the occupation or workplace</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Evaluation of Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.4</th>
<th>2.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apply flexible yet rigorous assessment practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate evidence and provide feedback</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document relevant observations and answers to questions</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make reasoned judgments on evidence</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide and document rationale for decisions</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify learning gaps</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine credit awards or competence level</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide post-assessment guidance</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify a process for individuals to appeal an assessment decision</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Evaluation

A rating scale asked participants about their overall experience of the program.

- Usefulness of the program: 100% very useful
- Facilitation: 100% very adaptable/adaptable
- Delivery of the content, 100% very clearly/clearly
- Overall impression of the program: 100% excellent/good
- Confidence to implement the ideas: 92% very confident/confide
  8% not very confident
Card 9 -- OH&S Safety Training

The candidate has provided a copy of a certificate from the OH&S authority which indicates that they had participated in two half-day training sessions. One session dealt with workplace safety generally and the other dealt with appropriate maintenance of OH&S records within the workplace. Both were completed in the last year.
For additional information

Clarence De Schiffart
Clarence.deschiffart@nscc.ca

Diane Gordon
GORDONCD@gov.ns.ca