

# FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

## STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

LEADING FIREFIGHTERS EXAMINATION

PAPER

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

ITEM

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

STUDY NOTE No.

1306

### *INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE*

*This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.*

*Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied:*

*The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography:*

## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

### 1. Introduction

The UK fire industry has developed an integrated system whereby the development of organisations and people at all levels within them can be structured in a cohesive framework.

The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is not intended to provide organisations with a prescriptive training syllabus. The objectives in this area are to provide:

- A comprehensive set of national standards that should be applied to local risk and community needs;
- An emphasis on individual needs;
- A framework to influence rather than direct development.

IPDS is an integrated tool designed to help the Service's people to:

- Develop in their role;
- Demonstrate competence; and
- Maintain competence.

### 2. Competence

'Competence' can be described as having the skill, knowledge and ability to consistently achieve satisfactory performance in the workplace.

Competence relates to how well an individual performs their role at work in a particular situation. An individual can be described as competent if they have performed, and continue to perform, satisfactorily.

In the fire service context, competence in the workplace relates to four inter-related components, these are:

(a) Task skills

These are the routine and largely technical components of a function of a job. Eg Being able to climb a ladder.

(b) Task management

This is the ability to manage a group of task skills and prioritise between them. Eg. Climbing a ladder with a line of hose whilst wearing breathing apparatus, then entering the building to extinguish a fire.

(c) Contingency management

This is the skill to recognise and deal with things that go wrong or with the unexpected. Eg Having to suddenly evacuate from a building because there are signs of impending collapse.

(d) Environmental skills

This is the ability to deal with the factors required in fulfilling the wider role. Eg Ensuring safety and interacting with people.

### 3. Stages of Competence

There are three phases in achieving competence. These are:

(a) Acquisition

In 'acquisition', training and development programmes will enable an individual to learn and acquire the knowledge, skill, attitude and understanding required for their role.

(b) Application

When an individual has successfully demonstrated that they can meet the required standard in applying this learning within the workplace, the person is deemed to be competent in application.

(c) Maintenance

Once deemed to be competent, the individual will maintain competence and develop skills in the existing role.

### 4. Performance Standards

As described in 2 above, competence relates to how well an individual performs their role at work.

In order to be able to measure this competence it is necessary to describe what people need to be able to do in a range of activities.

When these activities are described collectively for a given role, they are called Performance Standards.

If the performance standards relate to a specific job, such as a Firefighter, electrician or plumber, they are often described as being Occupational Standards.

(a) National Occupational Standards

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are nationally agreed standards of competence. They define the outcomes and expectations of workplace performance through performance criteria. The NOS consist of Units and Elements describing the standards of performance. NOS derive from a functional (what is done) and task (how is it done) analysis of all the roles found in the fire service. This analysis was used to draw up the role maps.

NOS align with the wider world of education development through the integration of key core skills.

Key core skills help people to achieve competence in the workplace by supporting demonstration of knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the role.

Key core skills are:

- Communication (written and oral);
- Application of numbers;
- Information technology;
- Working with others;
- Improving own learning and performance; and
- Problem solving.

(b) Role Maps

Role maps are based on NOS and contain Units of competence relevant to a particular role such as Firefighter.

Role maps describe:

- The functions of an individual's role;
- The standard to which that role should be performed; and
- The knowledge and understanding needed to underpin that role.

Therefore, the fire service can use the role maps to assist in the process of linking individual performance to team, function and organisational objectives.

Each function is described as a 'Unit' of the role map; in turn, the Units are themselves broken down into bite-sized chunks called 'Elements'.

## 5. Assessment

Assessment and, in particular, workplace assessment is a process for assessing people against role maps and NOS in the normal day-to-day workplace activity. It is an essential part of demonstrating competence, in line with IPDS.

Through the assessment of a person's performance, it is possible to identify areas where competence has been demonstrated or where improvement may be required, and then to assist that person to meet any identified development needs.

The key elements of this approach are to:

- **LOOK AT WHAT PEOPLE DO**, by identifying the job role and defining what they are expected to do.
- **EXPLAIN HOW WELL THEY SHOULD DO IT**, by making it clear what should be achieved, rather than how it should be achieved.
- **SUPPORT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TO HELP PEOPLE**, by identifying development needs, and designing development opportunities to meet those needs.
- **REVIEW WHAT PEOPLE HAVE ACTUALLY ACHIEVED**, by checking attitudes, behaviours, skills, knowledge and understanding have actually improved following involvement in training/development activity.

## 6. National Vocational Qualifications

Where Performance Standards have been specified to an agreed format by an approved industry lead body and accepted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the standards can be classified as National Vocational Qualifications.

An individual registered with an appropriate awarding body, such as City and Guilds or the Edexcel Foundation, whose performance against the standards has satisfied the approved assessment process, can be awarded a National Vocational Qualification for the role.

## References

Fire Services Examinations Board