

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

STATION OFFICERS' EXAMINATION

PAPER

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

SUBJECT

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

ITEM

TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

STUDY NOTE No.

3307

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.

TRAINING AND COMPETENCE

1. Introduction

An organisation can normally satisfy the requirements for the health, safety and welfare of people at work by providing and maintaining:

- a safe working environment;
- safe work equipment;
- safe systems of work; and
- a competent workforce.

This study note relates to the provision of a competent workforce and the main components of a system of training for competence.

2. Relevant Legislation

Various statutes impose requirements for personnel to be trained to a competent level and thereafter for that competence to be maintained, in particular:

- The Fire Services Act 1947 (as amended);
- The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974;
- The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999; and
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992.

These statutes indicate that the competence of personnel at work is the responsibility of both the individual and of the organisation.

3. Definition of Competence

In a Fire Service context the definition of competence is:

'The ability to consistently achieve workplace performance within an individual's role as defined by the appropriate national standard'.

4. The Focus of a System of Training for Competence

Training to achieve competence is an important element in the delivery of a safe and effective fire service and provides the opportunity to improve all aspects of service delivery through the contributions of a competent workforce.

A system of training for competence should be introduced and maintained to provide a structure for training that will equip people the skills, knowledge and understanding, attitudes, and experience to undertake their job role.

The focus of such a system must be upon the functional outcomes required in the workplace that underpins workplace performance. This will enable training departments to design training delivery systems that are directly relevant to the role of the individual and appropriate to his/her needs.

5. Objectives of a System of Training for Competence

An effective system of training for competence will enable the brigade to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) Deliver training to meet the brigade's stated aims and objectives.
- (b) Contribute to the effective delivery and improvement of service.
- (c) Establish the performance outcomes that the personnel in each role within the organisation are required to achieve in the workplace.
- (d) Support individuals in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes, which will enable them to apply, and consistently perform to, appropriate national standards in the workplace.
- (e) Train and develop individuals to maintain the currency of their competence through a planned performance review to identify individual development needs and to decide which needs are risk critical.
- (f) Provide a system of continuous assessment of performance in the workplace.
- (g) Review, evaluate and improve both the quality and relevance of learning and development activities.
- (h) Develop people to fulfil both current and future roles.
- (i) Create an environment where learning is seen as something positive, worthwhile and essential to the efficiency and effectiveness of the brigade.

6. Attainment of Competence

Attainment of competence generally comprises two elements:

- (a) Acquisition:

The stage at which an individual is undertaking a structured learning program, designed to develop their knowledge, skills, attitude and understanding identified for a particular role.

Once an individual has demonstrated that they have acquired the knowledge and skills identified for their role they are described as 'competent in acquisition'.

(b) Application:

The stages at which individuals, who have demonstrated that they are competent in acquisition are now able to consistently apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in the workplace as described in the appropriate national standard.

An individual who can consistently maintain this standard is described as having demonstrated 'competence in application'.

7. Training Departments

A system of training for competence should identify a role for training departments in both the stages of acquisition and application. However, their prime objectives are to provide the training and support that will enable firefighters and others to achieve and maintain competence in their roles in the workplace. It follows from this, that whilst the acquisition stage is of critical importance, the real focus for the training is ensuring competence in application.

8. Assessment

A system of training for competence places the emphasis on workplace performance and it is this demonstration of performance that is assessed.

Individuals demonstrate, through a system of assessments against the appropriate national standard, that they can consistently perform their work as a competent individual and embrace the safe person concept.

Line managers have an extremely important part to play in this area of the system, indeed, their role is fundamental to its success as it is they who have the responsibility for assessing and judging workplace performance, and making decisions regarding the competence of their staff.

9. Training Evaluation and Validation

A system of training for competence must include a process that is able to measure the success or failure of the training function.

Validation is a process that confirms the acquisition of learning and competence, in both a training and workplace environment.

Evaluation is a process that determines the overall effectiveness of the training function as a whole by examining the planning, design, delivery, resourcing and management of training.

Within a brigade's management system, the evidence gained from the evaluation informs the brigade's audit processes.

10. Records

In accepting that there are two stages of competence, acquisition and application, an appropriate method of recording the training provision, workplace activities carried out and the outcome of any assessment is required.

It is not acceptable to simply indicate that an individual took part in a particular working activity on a certain date. Records should indicate whether or not the necessary performance outcomes were achieved to the prescribed standard. They should also indicate if any training need was identified and how it will be addressed.

Individuals should have ownership of their personal record of achievement and together with their line manager, periodically sign the document to agree, or not, the accuracy and currency of its contents.

11. Role-Maps

A 'role-map' is a collection of performance outcomes grouped together into functions that define the activities relevant to a particular role.

A role-map will identify how that role contributes to achieving the organisation's aims, goals and objectives.

Within a role-map, there is no constraint on the number of functions identified for a particular role.

The number may vary from role to role, many of which may be common to other roles and a function that appears in a role-map for a Crew Commander may also appear in the role-map for a Watch Commander.

What will be different will be the **context** in which the function is carried out in the different roles; for example, the levels of responsibility and the range of conditions that apply will be different. However, the desired outcomes will be the same.

12. Appropriate National Standards

National vocational standards are nationally defined occupational standards that have been developed from Fire Service role maps. They:

- (a) Identify the main roles and responsibilities within an occupational area;
- (b) Take the form of units based on the roles and responsibilities;
- (c) Show the outcomes of competent performance including the essential knowledge and understanding required; and
- (d) Show the standard of occupational competence to be reached for the stated outcome.

The successful demonstration of attainment of the national standards can lead to the award of a National Vocational Qualification when a candidate is registered with an appropriate awarding body through an Approved Centre.

References

Fire Service Circular 15 /1997 "Training for Competence"
Scottish Fire Service Circular 1 /1998 "Training for Competence"
A Competence Framework for the Fire Service
Fire Services Examinations Board
Fire Service Training Manual