Explanation of Scoring and Evidence

COMPASS – The Competency Assessment Tool for Project Professionals.

Contents

What is COMPASS?

COMPASS is QA's online assessment tool for Project Professionals. It is accessed online at https://compass.qa.com.

COMPASS utilises the Association for Project Management (APM) Competence Framework, which has been developed through the knowledge and experience of project management practitioners from across the UK, within both industry and academia, together with extensive research of project management competence frameworks throughout the world. It is founded on the APM Body of Knowledge (5th edition, 2006) and the ICB-International Project Management Association (IPMA) Competence Baseline (ver. 3.0).
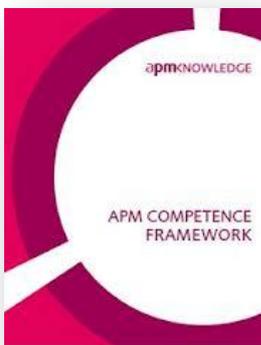
The APM Competence Framework provides a robust, holistic and clear set of standards for use by the project management community.

COMPASS allows the identification and classification of the different competence elements needed for effective project management by project managers at all levels, taking into consideration project complexity.

COMPASS can assist individuals and organisations in:

- The recruitment of project professionals and be used as part of the selection process
- Development of project professionals, identifying strengths and opportunities for improvement
- Validation of acquired knowledge and experience via a 180° or 360° analysis
- The identification of appropriate qualifications for those interested in project management and personal development
- Providing a basis for ongoing self assessment and continuous professional development (CPD)

Competence vs Competency

In order for you to fully understand what is being asked of you when you complete a COMPASS assessment, it is prudent to clarify the definitions of competence and competency and the context they are used in COMPASS.

|	COMPETENCE	COMPETENCY
Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD):	*"Competence relates to a system of minimum standards or is demonstrated by performance and outputs".*	*"The behaviours that employees must have, or must acquire, to input into a situation in order to achieve high levels of performance"*
APM	*"The expected outcome or performance standard that is achieved as a result of applying a combination of knowledge, personal attitude, and skills and experience in a certain function".*	*"The language of performance in an organisation, articulating both the expected outcomes of an individual's efforts and the manner in which these activities are carried out."*

So COMPASS is based on a Competence Framework which defines the expected performance standard of a project professional, and in that framework, there are a number of individual competencies that you will be expected to score yourself or another person against.

For clarity, the following diagram is the simplistic view of how we assess competency in COMPASS.
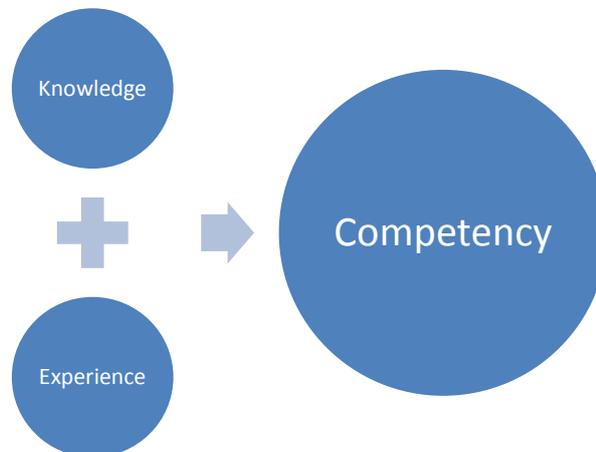
The APM Wheel of Competence

The APM Wheel of Competence illustrates three competence elements required of an effective project professional, and these are split into three domains: technical, behavioural and contextual. In additional, at the hub of the wheel are five key concepts which refer to the environment within which a project is undertaken.
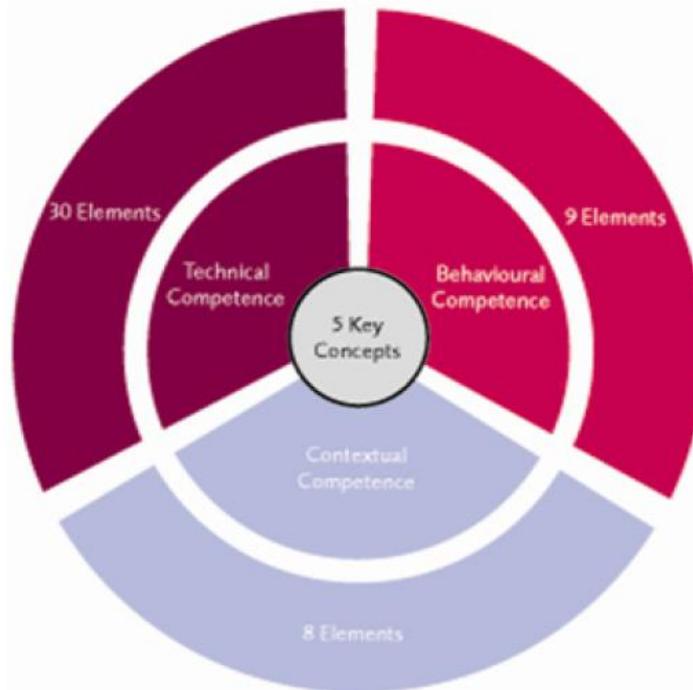
The 5 Key concepts

- **Project management** - the process, by which projects are defined, planned, monitored, controlled and delivered such that agreed benefits are realised
- **Programme management** - the coordinated management of related projects, which may include related business as usual activities that together achieve a beneficial change of a strategic nature for an organisation
- **Portfolio management** - is the selection and management of all of an organisation's projects, programmes and related business as usual activities, taking into account resource constraints. Portfolios can be managed at an organisational, programme or functional level
- **Project context** - refers to the environment within which a project is undertaken. Projects do not exist in a vacuum and an appreciation of the context within which the project is being performed will assist those involved in project management to deliver a project
- **Project office** - serves the organisation's project management needs. A project office can range from simple support functions for the project manager to responsibility for linking corporate strategy to project execution.

The Competence Domains

Technical

The technical competence domain contains the functional project management competence elements. The scope of technical competences includes the elements relating to:
- The delivery of projects, programme and portfolios
- The integration of work in any temporary project, programme and portfolio organisation
- The production of project deliverables in the project organisation
- The progress through all phases of the project, all stages of a programme and all periods of the portfolio considered.

Behavioural

The behavioural competence domain contains the personal project management competence elements, covering attitudes and skills. The scope of behavioural competences includes the elements relating to:
- The project manager specifically
- The project manager's relationships with direct contacts in and around the project
- The project manager's interaction with the whole project and parties involved
- The project manager's interaction with the broader environment, such as the political, economical, sociological, cultural and historical context.

Contextual

The contextual competence domain contains the organisational competence elements. The scope of contextual competences includes elements relating to:
- The role of project management in permanent organisations
- The interrelationship between project management and the organisation's business functions and administration (business as usual).

Project complexity

For levels of competence to have meaning it is important that the concept of project complexity is clearly understood, and to this end, COMPASS includes a simple Complexity Questionnaire that can be completed at any time, and ideally before you start the COMPASS assessment. As you will see from the scoring section of this document, it is impossible to score highly in any competency if your experience is only on non-complex projects. COMPASS has a built in limiter until the result of the complexity questionnaire validates your experience.

The APM considers that for a project to be considered 'complex' it would need to score highly against the following indicators/criteria:
- Objectives, assessment of results
- Interested parties, integration
- Cultural and social context
- Degree of innovation, general conditions
- Project structure, demand for coordination
- Project organisation
- Leadership, teamwork, decisions
- Resources, including finance
- Risks and opportunities
- Project management methods, tools and techniques.

An individual's experience of complexity may have been gained on more than one project, but the currency of any such experience obtained more than five years ago will be limited and should, in most circumstances, be discounted.

What should I be scoring?

Scoring in COMPASS is an emotive subject, with some people erring on the side of caution and scoring below their actual level and others who over estimate their knowledge and experience scores to impress. Neither party in this case will gain anything from the experience of using COMPASS or the overall objective of the exercise which is to identify development areas that the organisation can support them. In all cases it is best to be honest and appropriate with the scoring and provide evidence to justify the score.

By way of introduction, you will see the following terms used for describing the knowledge and experience at each level so you can start to get a feel for where you sit.

Key terms for knowledge
- Awareness
- Knows
- Describe
- Understanding
- Good understanding
- Detailed understanding
- Deep knowledge

Key terms for experience
- Participated
- Practiced
- Independently practiced
- Managed others
- Guided and facilitated

Generic terms
- Single project
- Multiple projects
- Complex projects

In COMPASS, you will have a handy reference as you rollover each of the scores in the slider bar (for more information on the interface please take a look at the COMPASS User guide). The following table gives you all of the scores and what is expected at each score.

SCORE	KNOWLEDGE	EXPERIENCE
0	No Knowledge	No Experience
1	Has an awareness of the competence element	Has participated in a single project which involved the competence element
2	Knows about the competence element	Has participated in a number of projects which have involved the competence element
3	Can describe the competence element	Has practiced the competence element with others in a number of projects
4	Has an understanding of how the competence element could be practiced within a single project	Has independently practiced the competence element in a number of projects
5	Has an understanding of how the competence element could be practiced within a number of projects and can evaluate the value to the projects	Has managed others in practicing the competence in a number of projects
6	Has a good understanding of how the competence element could be practiced within a complex project and can evaluate and adapt as required	Has managed others in practicing the competence in a complex project
7	Has a detailed understanding of how the competence element is practiced within complex projects and can critically evaluate and optimise as required	Has managed others practicing the competence element in a number of complex projects
8	Has a detailed understanding of how the competence element is practiced within complex projects and can critically evaluate and develop further as required	Has managed others practicing the competence element in many complex projects

9	Has a deep knowledge of how the competence element is practiced within very complex projects and educate others	Has guided and facilitated others in practicing the competence element in very complex projects
10	Has a deep knowledge of all aspects of the competence element in very complex projects and is a recognised industry expert (written papers and presentations)	Has guided and facilitated others in all aspects of the competence element in very complex projects and is a recognised industry expert

At the end of the COMPASS assessment, the ultimate goal will be to give you an overall APM level , from A through to D. Although scores vary for each individual competence the average scores for knowledge and experience will be broadly calculated as shown below. Your own organisation may have mapped each of these levels to specific job roles and also defined benchmarks for each role in terms of what each individual competency standard should be attained. At QA we define this as "what 'good' looks like in your organisation".

Level of Competence	APM Level D	APM Level C	APM Level B	APM Level A
Knowledge	4	5	6	7
Experience	0/optional	4	6	7
Average	4	4.5	6	7

The table below shows the minimum and maximum expected scores for each APM level, and as you can see, there is a degree of overlap. This is due to the fact that some people will be able to score very highly on a single competency but overall their average across all the competencies may be a lot lower. This is not a bad thing, and may highlight a need to develop knowledge and experience in other areas to grow as a confident and competent project professional.

0.1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10
					APM Level A Av - 7.0				
				APM Level B Av - 6.0					
		APM Level C Av - 4.5							
	APM Level D Av - 4.0								

By way of clarification, the APM describes the four levels of competence above as:
- Projects director (APM Level A)
- Senior project manager (APM Level B)
- Project manager (APM Level C)
- Project management associate (APM Level D)

As you would expect, the level of competence required at each APM Level increases as the required knowledge and experience of the individual broadens and deepens.

Providing evidence

Evidence should be provided to support your score. It should not be a monologue of your life's work, but a simple statement justifying your score. You should be guided by your organisation as to when you are required to provide evidence. COMPASS does not mandate evidence for any competence, so it is optional and should be used when you feel justification is necessary.

Where you do wish to provide evidence, as guidance we suggest looking to the APM's Registered Project Professional (RPP) for how to structure your evidence. For example: The statements should be written in the first person avoiding acronyms and jargon. It may be beneficial to consider the statements in terms of the **STAR** technique; describing the **S**ituation in which the competence was demonstrated; the **T**asks, **A**ctions and **R**esults. You may have demonstrated the competences yourself, or managed project teams, senior stakeholders, sponsors and other managers demonstrating those competences.

We suggest 150-200 words is appropriate for a statement of evidence and should reflect your latest project where the competency can be demonstrated.

Example evidence statement :

Competence : Scheduling

In Project 1, I was responsible for managing the scheduling function. I deployed scheduling resource from the Joint Venture partners and supply chain. My scheduling staff defined the scope of the contract, the activities in each phase, durations of the activities and the interdependencies (predecessors/successors). The critical path was analysed and the key milestones defined in accordance with contract requirements. Through JV team meetings, which I chaired, the team reviewed the development of the schedule. Resources required for each activity were quantified to allow estimating of the overall contract price. In Project 5, I managed the input of various departments and team members to establish and monitor progress against the schedule. Fortnightly, I chaired the team progress review meetings. Progress against schedule was reviewed, compared with the PMP and any key out of tolerance issues were escalated to the Executive Board. All changes to the project were agreed and the schedule updated accordingly. (Word count: 155)

Why is this evidence satisfactory?

- The person has demonstrated that they have managed others in the execution of the competence.
- The person's own role is clear in the execution of the competence.
- The person has demonstrated that the competence was undertaken in the context of a complex project as defined in the project complexity questionnaire.
- At least 50% of the indicators within the competence have been demonstrated.