Competencies and assessment in eduu.school

What are competencies?

We believe that for students to develop they need a holistic approach to their education. They should be ambitious, happy and able to achieve well beyond their potential. The competency framework enables students to be self-critical, allowing them to believe they can improve skills, knowledge and abilities through practice and hard work. There are ten areas of student development in the competency framework; seven relating to academic development and three relating to how students are growing as people.

Academic
- Communication
- Reading
- Numeric
- Social and Environmental
- Scientific
- Technological
- Creative

Personal
- Personal Learning
- Personal Social
- Professional Development

Competencies range from **Entry Stage** to **Stage 3**, which become more challenging as students progress through the year groups and their learning. Each lesson has at least one competency as part of it and students work to move themselves from **Emerging** to **Advanced** across differing stages whilst engaging with content. Student progress towards competencies is rigorously assessed by teachers. This assessment is complemented by regular peer and self-assessment by students. Teachers and students use the competencies to identify strengths and areas of development, refine work and set targets with confidence and accuracy.

Example of what a competency looks like:

Communication

CL.WP.01: Ideas

Description: Write imaginative, interesting and developed texts (Ideas)

Entry Stage

Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
I can repeat an idea that has already been said to me.	I have thought of an idea on my own, but it needs developing. At the moment, my idea is very simple and repeats itself.	I have thought of a relevant, original idea. I am beginning to add a little detail to my initial idea, but sometimes I repeat myself and more detail is needed so others can understand it.	I can produce an original and relevant idea. The content included is appropriate, and I can draw on other influences (i.e. through things I have read or researched) to add detail.

Stage 1

Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
I can produce a series of relevant ideas, but struggle to communicate these effectively. Some of my ideas need developing; they are quite simple and have a straightforward viewpoint.	I can communicate a series of ideas with some success. My ideas are relevant and the content I have chosen is appropriate. Most of my ideas are detailed and have simple links connecting them. My viewpoint is still simple, but it is generally established and maintained.	I can communicate my ideas with success. My ideas are relevant and developed with some imaginative detail. My viewpoint is becoming more complex, but is inconsistent and can be confusing.	I can communicate my ideas with success. Those who read or hear my ideas are interested and engaged. My ideas are relevant and developed with imaginative detail. My viewpoint is becoming more complex and imaginative. Whilst there may be a few mistakes, my viewpoint is generally consistent and secure.

Stage 2

Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
My writing is becoming truly imaginative and original. I am beginning to adapt my ideas to suit purpose and audience, although I make some mistakes when doing this. My viewpoint is more complex and is mostly sustained throughout.	My writing is imaginative and original. I have generally successfully adapted my ideas to suit a variety of purposes and audiences. My viewpoint is established and sustained throughout and I have tried to use a range of stylistic devices to achieve an intended effect.	My writing is imaginative and original. I have successfully adapted my ideas to suit a variety of purposes and audiences and thought carefully about my intended effect. My viewpoint is established and sustained throughout and I have successfully used a range of stylistic devices to achieve a desired outcome.	My writing is imaginative and can be successfully adapted to suit a variety of forms, purposes and audiences. I write consistently with distinctive viewpoints and styles that are matched to and achieve an intended impact.

Students can progress through a competency across 3 Stages with 4 tiers at each Stage (Emerging/ Developing/ Proficient/ Advanced)

The above competency rubrics can be used formatively and summatively to provide students meaningful feedback on their work towards a skill. In addition to this, the information from the competency rubrics can be used to adapt and modify planning to make the curriculum personalised to each student.

Why use competencies?

It is our belief that the competency framework enables teachers, students and families to engage in meaningful conversations regarding a student's personal attributes, behaviours and outputs. Through this mechanism the students' learning and success can be at the forefront of all interactions and decisions.

The daily use of the competency structure allows for clear formative discussions and, at key time intervals, summative measures to be made about a student's performance across a variety of key literacies. Using the competencies empowers teachers and students to steer their learning and make sensible judgments about what is working and how to improve.

For students to be successful in school and in life they must be resilient, independent, critical thinkers and effective communicators – the competency framework not only provides opportunities to practise these skills, but to have a student's efforts acknowledged and honed over time.

Therefore, when a student has transitioned through the curriculum they are not only equipped with a strong foundation of National Curriculum knowledge but are thoroughly competent and achieve mastery in a range of academic and personal skills that they can apply to the demands of Key Stage 4 and beyond.

Many professional bodies, including the CIPD (The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), place competencies at the centre of their approach and advise to employers and employees – 'competencies are central to job performance, as all careers require a mix of behaviour, attitude and skill'[1]. We see competencies as a key factor in preparing our students for academic success and to be well reasoned, informed and self-aware in their life beyond school.

[1] Weeks, A, (captured 2021 from CIPD Factsheet on Competencies): Competence & Competency Frameworks | Factsheets | CIPD

How are the competencies used?

Competencies are used in a four key ways:

1. To inform curriculum planning and sequencing – so that students accumulate the necessary skills to be successful throughout Key Stage 3 and beyond.
2. To provide a common language that enables deeper links across subject disciplines.
3. Formative assessment – daily routines enable students to reflect and improve on their learning in and progression in sessions with support.
4. Summative assessment – to capture key outputs in a theme, across a term and year and then subsequently personalise the learning for students.

1. Competencies and the curriculum

The competency framework has been created, reviewed, honed and developed over ten years and with the support of education professionals at a variety of levels. The purpose has been to establish a comprehensive and rigorous set of skills that can be utilised to foster students' development academically and personally.

The nature of this undertaking has meant that the competency framework underpins all theme lessons and has been meticulously coordinated into the threads of learning to provide an appropriate sequencing and accumulation of skills. It is our belief that the spread of competencies we seek to develop acts to enthuse and enrich students' experience of school and most importantly make them professional learners with a desire to succeed. In every lesson within the framework you there is at least one competency which helps students understand what they are trying to achieve and have success criteria present. This is often accompanied by a review of their current place on the competency and at the end of the lesson an opportunity to reflect on progress made.

2. Competencies: A common language

The intention of the competency framework is clear – there are a broad set of competency literacies that cover ten discrete areas: seven with an academic focus and three with a personal learning focus.

It is through a learner gathering these skills over time and in a systematic way that enables them to realise their full potential. The curriculum is fundamental to the delivery of these, however, this is not to happen in isolation.

Our provision with the curriculum provides a great platform for students to experience different disciplines and make connections between them via their personal journey through a competency. This can be supplemented by discrete subject areas making use of our common competency language.

It is through this interconnected approach that learners can see the relevance of what they are doing in each lesson and subject area in school. For learning to flourish over time it is pivotal that students can make connections across curriculums and deepen their appreciation on conceptual knowledge and garner greater competence[2] – the competency framework provides a common language to achieve this.

Competencies also allow a real dialogue between students, teachers and families where they can talk not about why they may be at a certain stage in a particular subject but where they are struggling and how they can improve. Competencies provide an immediate map to intervention for a student.

[2] Ofsted (2019), Education Inspection Framework: Overview of Research: Research for education inspection framework (publishing.service.gov.uk)

3. Formative assessment of competencies

The competency framework is used as a formative tool for assessment, as the accompanying rubrics (the information that details how to be successful in a competency) is intended to be applied and used to adapt and modify teaching strategies and activities in every session to support students' learning[3].

Each lesson contains a competency focus that has been strategically placed within the curriculum to allow for effective student advancement in this area. Students are encouraged to self-reflect on their journey with a competency throughout a lesson. Teachers utilise the competency and its accompanying rubric to shape the direction of their questioning, provide assessment for learning points at appropriate lesson intervals and adjust the direction within the lesson and potentially the start of the next lessons should development in an area not be as expected.

We value students' development in the academic and personal competency areas as this unlocks links between activities and subjects, as well as deepening the learning. Therefore, their use in class, which can be as simple as a student identifying their learning and progression in a competency via an exit card at the end of the lesson, provides vital information that staff can use to further personalise the learning experience.

The competencies are used throughout the feedback cycle with students to ensure that the pedagogy can be adaptive and responsive and so the student gets opportunity to revisit and make advancement with their skills and learning. It is important to note that some responsibilities for learning then falls to the students, who are encouraged to collect, collate and coordinate their work towards becoming an exceptional learner. This is best evidenced by the students' self-review of the personal competencies using their personal competency passport. These offer students the chance to reflect on their success in an area of personal competence – for example, their ability to collaborate well or evaluate the success of themselves or a team. Such self-awareness traits permit our students to become truly professional in their approach to studies.

[3] Williams, D and Black, P (2006), Inside the Black Box: raising Standards through Classroom Assessment, GL assessment Limited; UK ed. edition

4. Summative assessment of competencies

Over the course of the Key Stage 3 curriculum, key competency milestones are monitored that act to facilitate clear growth of the learners. Tracking and monitoring certain competencies that act as summative capture points inform reporting to families and opportunities to formally review the curriculum. These formal points of competency assessment in a year are purposefully placed to allow student development to be highlighted and practice to be modified where necessary.

These assessment points are linked to a more thorough marking and feedback of a specific student output and data of a students' progress in this area is monitored and acted upon centrally. Within each theme there are typically two or three key competencies that will be recorded and acted upon through this summative mechanism.

Student attention is always focussed upon the aspects that show merit towards a competency grade being awarded and the areas of future development with opportunity being provided to further work on these skills in subsequent sessions. By regularly monitoring certain competencies that build across the year and time within Key Stage 3, students have chances to access and expand their capacity across a breadth of skills.