

Using National Occupational Standards

Toolkit for HR managers and line managers

Introduction

Effective workforce planning, job role design and training are essential for any organisation striving to meet its goals and operate at its best. With the right structure in place, organisations can ensure they have the right people with the right skills in the right roles.

To achieve this, organisations need a clear and consistent framework that helps define the skills, knowledge and understanding required for each job role. So where should organisations start? By using National Occupational Standards.

National Occupational Standards provide a structured approach by outlining the performance criteria, knowledge and understanding required across job roles. This makes them an invaluable tool for supporting job role design, training and development and effective workforce planning.

This toolkit is designed to provide insight and guidance on how National Occupational Standards can be used by employers in job role design, performance management and career progression and development to strengthen existing practices.



Find out more about National Occupational Standards in our [explainer factsheet](#)

Watch a [short video](#) about the National Occupational Standards for Resilience and Emergencies.

What are the benefits of using National Occupational Standards?

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are developed by the industry, for the industry. For an organisation, adopting NOS can be transformative. They help create a well-structured workforce where everyone understands what's expected in their role. They also enhance training effectiveness by focusing on the right skills and knowledge and ensure the team's capabilities remain aligned with industry standards.



Using the standards offers several advantages:

- Aligns workforce capabilities with industry standards, ensuring consistency and quality across roles
- Provides a reliable framework for workforce planning, aligning recruitment and career progression with industry benchmarks
- Enables targeted and efficient training, addressing competency gaps and helping employees develop the right skills
- Embeds governance functions, supporting risk management and compliance
- Encompasses applied knowledge and understanding, not just the task, promoting comprehensive skill development
- Offers an evidence base for inspectors and quality assurance for regulated industries
- Built by subject matter experts, ensuring relevance and reliability
- Consistency and standardisation, ensuring transferability and application of skills

What can National Occupational Standards be used for?

In the context of HR and workforce planning, NOS provide a consistent framework for supporting recruitment and retention, developing people and planning the workforce, ensuring workforce sustainability.



Role design: After defining the key tasks and responsibilities of a role, the relevant NOS can be used to outline the specific performance criteria, knowledge and understanding required. These details can be incorporated into the job description and person specification, ensuring clarity around what is expected from the job holder.



Performance management: NOS provide clear performance criteria, which can be integrated into performance appraisal systems to set measurable goals, assess employee progress and identify areas for development.



Career development: Employees can use NOS to evaluate their own skills and competences by comparing them to the objective criteria outlined in the standards. This enables individuals to assess their development, identify areas for improvement and track their career progression in a structured way.

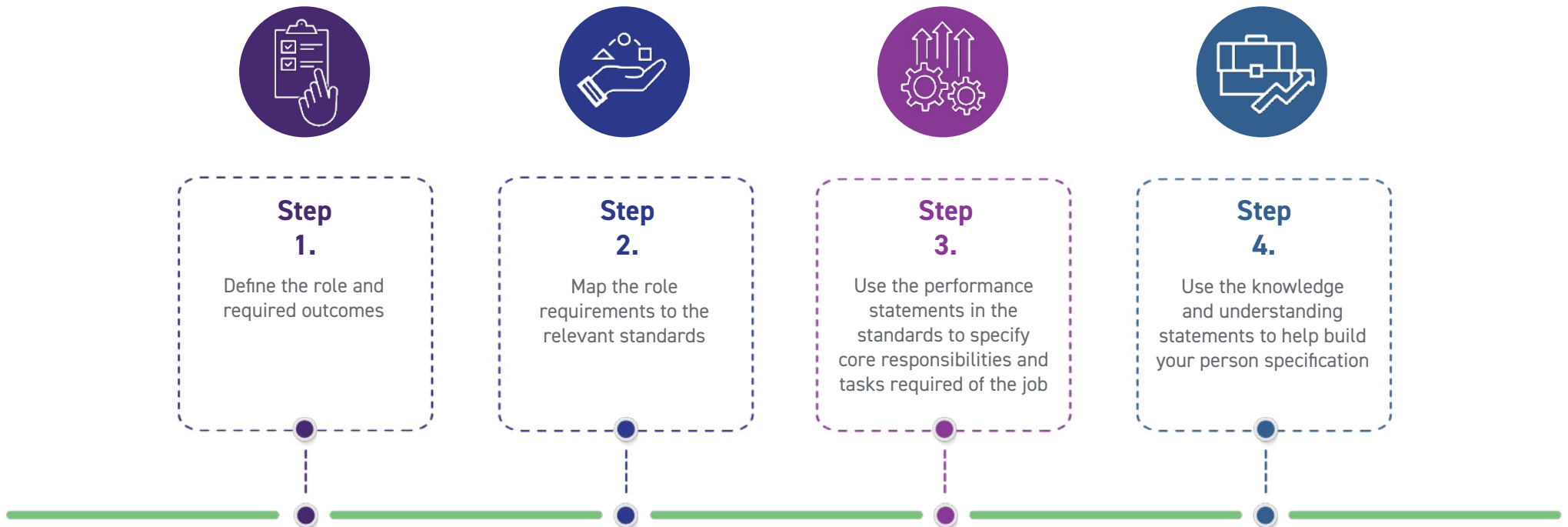
NOS can also support training design. Access our [toolkit for learning and development professionals](#) for guidance on how to effectively integrate NOS into your training processes.

Role design

Using NOS to create a competency-based job description



- Managers and HR teams can use NOS to describe the skills they need, ensuring alignment with national standards.
- The standards help identify clearly the competences required for job roles, providing a solid foundation for writing job descriptions, person specifications and job adverts.
- The performance criteria and knowledge requirements can be used by staff involved in recruitment to produce a checklist, enabling them to collect and assess relevant evidence during recruitment.



● Step one: Define the role and required outcomes

Start by clearly defining the role and the key outcomes expected from the position. This will help set the foundation for identifying the necessary competences and skills required for the role.

● Step two: Map the role requirements to the relevant standards

The next step is to identify and map the relevant NOS for Resilience and Emergencies to the role. For job descriptions, this involves selecting the standards that outline the competences an individual needs to demonstrate to fulfil the role effectively.

Whilst there is the specific suite of NOS for Resilience and Emergencies, there are many generic NOS which support the resilience function that apply to a broad range of roles and sectors. Some of the most common general standards relate to competences such as communication, health and safety, management and leadership and equality and diversity.

This helps keep the number of standards manageable and reduces the need to duplicate or create new standards for each business area or job role. In other terms, you might consider these to be transferable skills that apply across different sectors and roles.

You can view a mapping for the NOS for Resilience and Emergencies [here](#) and search the NOS [here](#).

● **Step three:** Use the performance statements in the standards to specify core responsibilities and tasks required of the job role

By taking the statements in the standards and applying it within your organisational context, you can make them specific to what the job role will need to do. For example, use the regulations, legislations, standards, policies and procedures that apply in your context in addition to the statements. This will amplify the standards, incorporating industry good practices and organisational purpose.

This step helps embed governance within all levels of organisational structure, which can help maintain or improve compliance, as well as provide a process to show good practice for inspections from regulatory bodies. Standards are built to facilitate any regulations, policies or procedures. There are a number of cases where this can apply in regulated industries, but equally, there are many ways that this applies to organisation specific standards, such as internal codes of conduct, HR policies, data protection policies and contractual agreements.

● **Step four:** Use the knowledge and understanding statements to help build your person specification

If specific knowledge areas are required to meet a performance statement, these should form part of the essential criteria in a person specification.

In addition, you can add behavioural competences, such as communication, problem-solving, or leadership skills. These are sometimes included in the standards but can also be informed by your organisational needs.

For example, if you were building a person specification for an event planner, you could use knowledge and understanding statements taken from [SFJCCAG1: Respond to emergencies](#)

Below are two of the statements and how these might be used to inform a person specification statement.

National Occupational Standard statement: you need to know and understand:

Common response and recovery priorities and intended outcomes for identified risks



Decision-making approaches in high stakes, time-constrained, dynamic, and uncertain contexts.

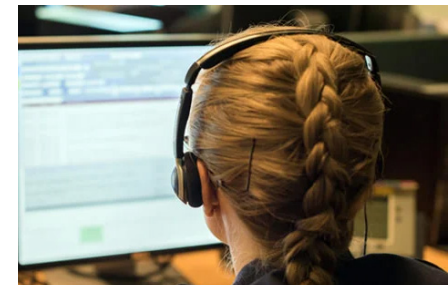


Person specification statement:

Strong understanding of response and recovery priorities, with the ability to implement effective strategies for managing risks.



Ability to make sound, effective decisions under pressure, managing uncertainty and complexity in high-stakes situations.



Performance management

Using NOS to perform a skills gap analysis and performance appraisals

- Managers and HR teams can use the standards to gauge the skills already in their workforce and use this information to set out training and recruitment plans.
- Descriptors of best practice and competence can be used as the basis of objectives and employee appraisals, or to otherwise set personal development plans.
- Any skills, behavioural or knowledge gaps identified can also be used to inform employee training programmes.
- Managers can help ensure an effective skills mix across the organisation.
- A follow up task for workforce planning can be to evaluate how any skills gaps impact performance, productivity and overall organisational success.



**Step
1.**

Identify the role and
tasks



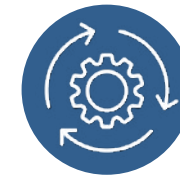
**Step
2.**

Identify the relevant
NOS



**Step
3.**

Assess current
competences



**Step
4.**

Identify gaps or strengths
and use the results
to set development
objectives and to
produce performance
management plans

● Step one: Identify the role and tasks

Choose the specific role you want to perform the appraisal or skills assessment for and identify the tasks performed within it. This will help clarify which competences and performance criteria from the NOS are relevant.

● Step two: Identify the relevant NOS

Select the appropriate NOS for the identified role and tasks. To support you in this step, you can refer to the NOS mapping in the '[Building a stronger resilience workforce through National Occupational Standards](#)' guide and search for NOS here. From the standard, you can pull out the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding required for the role.

Step three:
Assess current competences

Evaluate the employee's current skills or performance by comparing them with the skills and knowledge, or performance criteria outlined in the NOS. In a performance review, you might want to collect evidence to support your assessment, such as work samples, feedback, performance data or self-assessments.

Role:	
NOS: SFJCCAD2 Promote business continuity	Assessment
Are you able to...	
1. Identify stakeholders who can contribute to or would benefit from support in business continuity management	
2. Collaborate with partners, stakeholders and specialists to develop advice and assistance on business continuity management	
3. Consider relevant risk assessments when developing advice and assistance programmes in line with organisational requirements	
Etc...	
Do you know and understand...	
1. Legislative and organisational policies and procedures relevant to your organisation for providing advice and assistance on business continuity management and sharing information	
2. The characteristics of organisational resilience and the purpose of business continuity plans and arrangements	
3. Business continuity management principles, culture and life cycle	
Etc..	

● Step four: Identify gaps or strengths and use the results to set development objectives and to produce performance management plans

Based on the comparison, identify areas of strength or where there are gaps that need addressing. Establish development goals or performance objectives aligned with the competences outlined in the NOS to guide the employee's future growth. This could be used to inform:

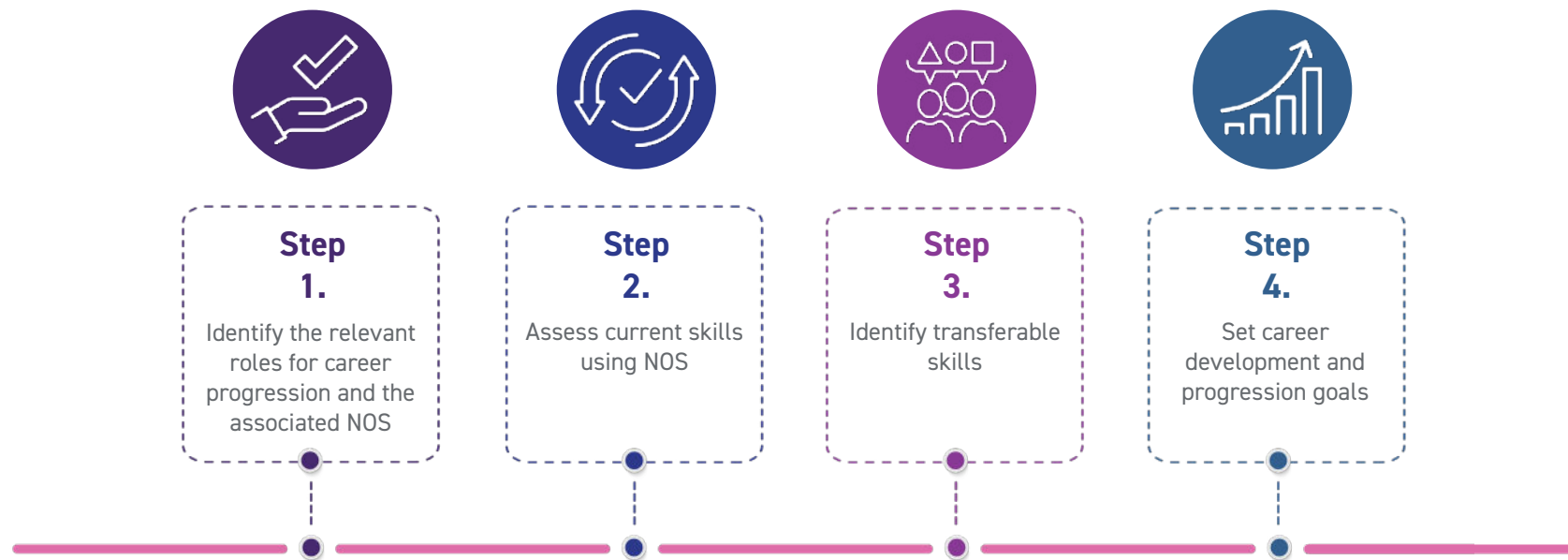
- Employee appraisal objectives for 121s
- Role or service key performance indicators, used in business reporting
- Employee training programmes (either formal or informal, delivered in-house or peer-to-peer, or external through training providers and qualifications)
- Personal improvement plans, or other HR processes
- Management decisions on service delivery, aligned to organisation objectives

Career development

Using NOS to plan career progression



- Employees can use the standards to assess their current levels of competence, allowing them to gauge their own development and vertical or lateral career progression.
- While NOS are not levelled, the same standards can appear across different roles at varying levels, depending on the context in which they are applied and the scope of a role. This enables employees to develop toward higher levels of competence.
- NOS help employees create clear career development plans, providing a structured approach to achieving career progression based on the skills and competences needed.



● Step one: Identify the relevant roles for career progression and the associated NOS

Choose the appropriate NOS for the employee's current role and the future roles they are aiming for. To support you in this step, you can refer to the NOS mapping in the ['Building a stronger resilience workforce through National Occupational Standards'](#) guide and search for NOS here. This will provide a clear, nationally recognised standard for the skills and competences required in those roles across the UK.

● Step two: Assess current skills using NOS

The employee should assess their existing skills and knowledge against the competences required for the role they aim to progress to. This serves as a skills checker, identifying where they meet or exceed national standards and highlighting areas for further development to achieve the desired career progression.

● Step three: Identify transferable skills

Compare the NOS requirements for the desired progression roles with the employee's current skill set. Identify transferable skills that can be developed or leveraged as the employee progresses. This will help employees understand how their existing competences (e.g., communication, leadership, problem-solving), can apply to other roles.

● Step four: Set career development and progression goals

Based on the skills assessment, create a tailored development plan that outlines clear career progression steps. Focus on the gaps between the employee's current competences and the requirements for the next level in their role or a related role. Set specific development goals that align with these national standards and incorporate company-specific training and development. This ensures employees are equipped with the necessary competences for progression while aligning with the national industry standards.



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