

# Exercise Science Practicum - Competency Assessment Guide

## Part A: How to Grade

The Exercise Science (ES) Competency Assessments are important documents that assist The University of Tasmania in awarding a student a grade for their Professional Experience Placements (PEP) Unit. The Competency Assessment form details 12 questions to direct agency supervisors in providing feedback that reinforces professional strengths and facilitates discussions and strategies around areas that need improvement.

To better enable a student's professional development whilst on practicum, this assessment is completed at two time points. Time point one is early in the practicum experience at ~40 hours of work, and is known as the **interim assessment**. The interim assessment allows students to receive early reinforcement of professional attributes and allows the university to instigate “at risk procedures” for students who are failing to meet minimum expectations. Time point two, at the completion of a placement is the **final assessment**; The University of Tasmania encourages both assessments to be completed interactively with the student where possible.

Use “**Part B: Competency Criteria Descriptions**” to help determine what skills, behaviours and tasks are expected for each criterion. Consider a “**Pass**” grade equivalent to the minimum safe standards expected for an entry level exercise scientist. For each performance indicator on the assessment form, the student must demonstrate appropriate and consistent performance of that behaviour or skill for their level of study, experience, and according to the [AES Professional Standards](#). A student who is consistently exceeding safe standards and ticks off most or all of the examples in the criteria descriptions may be given the rating “**Highly Competent**”, or “**Outstanding**”.

A “**Fail**” rating may be given where you deem a student is not yet meeting the minimum safe standards of a particular skill or behaviour. There is space where we ask you to provide feedback and improvement strategies if a student has been given a “Fail” rating. Please be objective in your ratings and consider client safety, comfort and the ES professional reputation as paramount when making your ratings. Students must work toward minimum of all “Pass” ratings by their final assessment or risk a fail in the unit.

For each criterion, extra space is provided on the assessment forms for specific comments, particularly in relation to how a student might improve their performance, or provide examples of circumstances where the student performances have been particularly strong. If any of the attributes are not able to be assessed, then please advise either (Not Applicable) **N/A (A)** or **N/A (B)** as described in the rating scale table (page 3).

Comparing students to other practicum students of your experience, or new (first-year) ES graduates may also be helpful when rating student performance. However, assessments are not designed to compare students to *experienced* Exercise Scientists in the workforce. Discussion of your ratings with the student and University staff is encouraged; please contact the PEP coordinator to discuss ratings or improvement strategies.

## Students at risk of failing

It is important to note the following if providing students with a “Fail” grade:

**Interim Assessment:** Students will be viewed as *'at risk of failing'* where

- They receive *three or more\** grades of “Fail” against the 12 assessment criteria; or
- Where unprofessional behaviour is identified which leads to the disruption of teaching, learning or research activities of other students/ staff, or which interferes with others performing their normal duties; or
- Where a client/patient is placed at unnecessary risk or the student fails to identify that a given situation requires skills and competencies beyond those of the student, and does not request assistance from the supervising staff member

**\* NOTE:** If a student receives three or more “Fail” grades in an interim assessment, you will be contacted by the PEP coordinator to discuss progress and determine whether the student requires a University “Student Communication and Support Plan”. Please use your instinct and don’t avoid using a “Fail” grade because you don’t wish to upset a student. Ask yourself “Would I be confident to leave the student working alone with a loved one?”. If the answer is “No” or “Not Yet”, then a “Fail” grade may be warranted for that criterion. Where you provide a “Fail” grade, we ask that you provide specific feedback and strategies on how to improve that skill or technique.

**Final Assessment:** Students may be viewed as *'failed'* where

- They receive *any single* “Fail” grade against one the 12 assessment criterion; or
- Where unprofessional behaviour has continued after intervention and lead to the disruption of teaching, learning or research activities of other students/staff, or which interferes with others performing their normal duties; or
- Where a client/patient is repeatedly placed at unnecessary risk or the student fails to identify that a given situation requires skills and competencies beyond those of the student, and does not request assistance from the supervising staff member.

## Table 1. Grading Explanations

Fail	Pass	Highly Competent (HC)	Outstanding (O)	Not Applicable (N/A)
Grade Equivalent (fail)	Grade Equivalent (pass)	Grade Equivalent (credit/distinction)	Grade Equivalent (High Distinction)	Ungraded
<p><i>Student does not yet meet minimum standards safe for criterion.</i></p> <p>Knowledge and skills are at an early stage. Does not synthesise information with regard to requirements. Frequently fails to comply with criterion. Requires high level of support, and rarely demonstrates independence. Demonstrates limited understanding of requirements. Put client at increased risk or did not take client safety and comfort into account. Contributes little with regard to criterion.</p>	<p><i>Student is at the minimum safe standard for criterion.</i></p> <p>Basic competency and minimum safe standard are evident. Synthesises information within known context, but requires some assistance with unknown context and/or external parties. Consistently complies with criterion. Requires some support but is independent in familiar/ appropriate contexts. Demonstrates good level understanding of requirements. Considers client safety and comfort. Actively contributes to criterion.</p>	<p><i>Student exceeds the minimum safe standard for criterion.</i></p> <p>Good repertoire of competencies. Synthesises information and applies critically within context at entry-level standard. Level of independence is high, but appropriate. Enthusiastic and proactive. Good understanding of requirements. Actively and consistently considers client safety and comfort. Consistent contribution with regard to criterion.</p>	<p><i>Student well exceeds the minimum safe standard for criterion.</i></p> <p>Extensive repertoire of competencies across diverse client range. Synthesises information and applies critically within context beyond entry-level standard. Level of independence is high, but appropriate. Consistently enthusiastic and proactive. In-depth understanding of requirements. Client safety is paramount consideration. Consistent contribution and leadership with regard to criterion</p>	<p><b>(A)</b> Criterion not applicable within the context of the facility.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>(B)</b> Insufficient observation of the student at the time to make assessment with regard to the given criterion</p>

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## Part B: Competency Criteria Descriptors

Supervisors may use these descriptors as a guide to skills and behaviours expected of Exercise Science graduates. If a student ticks off most, or all descriptors, you might consider them in the “Highly Competent [HC]” or “Outstanding [O]” grade range.

### Professional Practice:

#### 1. Demonstrates Professional Behaviour

- The student is appropriate with respect to agreed expectations of dress, grooming, attitude, and behaviour
- Punctual for agreed shifts and in contact in a timely manner where unforeseen circumstances (e.g. ill health or emergency) prevent them from attending placement
- Compliant with your workplace administration requirements, WHS policies, [AES Professional Standards](#), the [AES Scope of Practice](#), the [ESSA Code of Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice](#)
- Respects the rights of others in the workplace
- Gains and records informed consent according to workplace protocol

#### 2. Demonstrates Appropriate Client Interaction and Rapport Building

- The student displays appropriate self-confidence and has good interpersonal skills
- Is able to influence and develop a sense of authority in their role in both one-on-one and group situations
- Is empathetic (where appropriate) and creates positive, safe interactions with clients
- Maintains client confidentiality
- Maintains appropriate professional boundaries with client interaction

### 3. Demonstrates Self-Management Skills

- The student demonstrates ability to be safely autonomous in their role (e.g. leadership, industriousness, preparedness, willing to complete extra research, forward planning)
- Displays an appropriate level of organisation skill
- Demonstrates the ability to use down time and manage unforeseen events which are out of their control (can prioritise tasks)
- Able to complete tasks on time
- Demonstrates professional self-care (eg. seeks opportunity to debrief at the end of the day, or following stressful situations)

### 4. Demonstrates Collaborative Practice

- The student engages actively and respectfully with all team members and contributes to discussions or outcomes where appropriate
- Adapts to the workplace setting
- Can resolve conflicts with little support
- Knows how to refer for alternative/additional services appropriately (knows and abides by own scope of practice)

### 5. Demonstrates Appropriate Communication Skills

- Student is appropriate in terms posture, volume, tone and energy
- Greets clients appropriately, asks open-ended questions, listens effectively
- Oral, written, and non-verbal communication is appropriate within the work team and to clients
- Displays a flexible communication approach. (Uses a range of communication strategies to optimise client rapport and understanding, eg for clients that are hearing impaired, non-English speaking, cognitively impaired, culturally and linguistically diverse. Uses correct technical language where appropriate, avoids jargon and uses language appropriate to the health literacy of the client.)
- Can draft accurate reports, data handling and interpretation, or project work as appropriate to your worksite

## 6. Demonstrates Problem Solving and Decision-Making Skills

- The student is able to critically analyse situations and demonstrates sound evidence-based reasoning in decision making
- Demonstrates independent thought and action, anticipates problems, and fills gaps
- Solutions to problems are offered prior to direction from supervisors
- Able to follow-through on decisions and apply effective solutions

## 7. Demonstrates Awareness of own Limitations and Displays Commitment to Ongoing Learning

- The student recognises own professional limitations and actively engages in self-directed learning
- Demonstrates self-evaluation of performance
- Seeks regular feedback and improvement strategies
- Responds in a positive manner to feedback and questions
- Acts on constructive criticism and suggested improvement strategies, to improve future performance
- Willing to take responsibility for decision making when challenged

## Technical Skills

### 8. Demonstrates Appropriate Screening Skills

- The student structures a systematic, purposeful interview seeking qualitative and quantitative details
- Politely controls the interview to be timely and obtain relevant and comprehensive information (medical history, goals, barriers etc)
- Notices and responds to important client cues (verbal and non-verbal) during interview
- Correctly considers and stratifies risk for exercise
- Provides effective information on lifestyle behaviour and change, barrier solving, goal setting where appropriate
- Written SOAP notes are clear, concise, comprehensive, and in line with workplace standards and medio-legal requirements

## 9. Demonstrates Appropriate and Safe Assessment Skills

- The student uses sound clinical reasoning for test choices, which are based on evidence-based practice, client safety, abilities, goals, and restrictions
- Can clearly explain assessment procedures using correct and clear demonstrations where necessary
- Has clear understanding of contraindications for assessment procedures across broad range of client conditions
- Delivers assessments safely, effectively, with validity (in terms of test-retest reliability), and with client comfort in mind
- Chooses, explains and uses appropriate monitoring tools (eg: RPE, dyspnoea, pulse oximetry, visual appearance / non-verbal signals, “talk tests”, verbal feedback)
- Actively notices, seeks and responds to client feedback (verbal and non-verbal) and can safely modify assessments in accordance with client condition, medications (where appropriate), changing risk-factors, feedback, or findings throughout testing
- Correctly interprets assessment findings and implications, and can clearly explain these to clients

## 10. Demonstrates Appropriate and Safe Exercise Prescription

- The student designs client-centred exercise prescriptions that are safe, innovative, effective, and evidence-based
- Exercise prescriptions address client goals, training stage, functional capacity, medical history, and any other influencing factors
- Can justify exercise choices based on sound clinical reasoning
- Demonstrated ability to choose appropriate regressions and progressions

## 11. Demonstrates Appropriate and Safe Exercise Delivery

- The student understands and can act on contraindications to exercise
- Actively monitors, recognises, responds and acts on client signs, symptoms or feedback (non-verbal and verbal) during exercise, and can safely modify (regress / progress) exercises on the spot in response
- Safe and effective at delivering exercise to an individual (you are confident to briefly leave the student alone and believe they would do no harm)
- Safe and effective at delivering exercise to a group
- Offers accurate and appropriate coaching and cueing

## Foundational Knowledge:

### 12. Demonstrates Appropriate Knowledge Base

- The student can apply current anatomical, biomechanical, nutritional and pathophysiological knowledge across the client populations of your worksite
- Able to describe common health or medical interventions as appropriate to the client populations of your worksite
- Able to find and evaluate the evidence for exercise interventions across the client populations of your worksite
- Demonstrated understanding of theories and determinants of behaviour change, and their application in improving client compliance and self-management
- Accurate and meaningful advice is offered to clients
- The student has actively developed further understanding best practice exercise assessment and delivery (as it relates to your workplace) during the placement

Thank you for your time and energy in guiding our future Exercise Scientists.  
To discuss anything or gain further information on rating ES students in Competency Assessments  
please contact the PEP Coordinator