



## KSAs

**KSAs** is knowledge, skills, and abilities (qualifications and attributes) and represents what a person needs for a specific job. KSAs are always related to jobs.

- ◆ **Knowledge** is usually acquired from a specific source of information (e.g., a degree in computer science or an undergraduate degree in communication) and tends to be an understanding of the facts and procedures necessary for job performance.
- ◆ **Skill statements** are more finite measures of the ability to perform manual, verbal, or mental applications of data or things. For instance:
  - Performing calculations using percentages
  - Typing 60 words per minute
- ◆ **Ability statements** are observable behaviors. For example:
  - The ability to communicate in writing
  - A skill in leading a product development team



## FURTHER EXPLORATION...

### ONLINE CONNECTION: Task Analysis and Skills List

Begin by selecting an athlete, musician, teacher, or other professional to observe. (The observation may be conducted in person or via media sources. For example, if you wish to observe Tiger Woods playing golf, you may need to do this via a televised event.) Review the Task Analysis Internet resource at [http://web.uvic.ca/akeller/pw408/r\\_taskanal.html](http://web.uvic.ca/akeller/pw408/r_taskanal.html), with an emphasis on understanding the sections titled:

- What You Want to Discover in a Task Analysis
- How to Do a Task Analysis

Develop a task analysis and skills list for a professional job. Observe the selected individual doing his or her job. Complete a task analysis. Then develop a list of necessary skills for the job observed. Conduct the observation of your chosen professional and take notes. An average observation time would be one hour. Include the steps involved in completing the task. (Note: If you are watching Tiger Woods in a golf tournament, you may wish to focus on a snapshot of the task. For example, putting, driving, and so on. If you are observing a teacher, the snapshot may be the first five minutes of a class and “How to start a class” or “How to conduct a lecture using technology.”) Then write the task analysis on a separate sheet. Include 7 to 10 main steps in sequence.

Write a list of skills, or occupational competencies, that the professional you observed possesses that enabled him or her to complete the task successfully. Be creative when articulating occupational competencies. Use your own way of expressing the competency. For example, four potential occupational competencies for playing a trumpet might be: reads music, easily moves fingers (or has manual dexterity), maintains a beat, and has excellent lung capacity. On your sheet, make sure to note the professional observed. Finally, summarize your Task Analysis and list of skills.

## OCCUPATIONAL COMPETENCIES

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**Occupational competencies** are the specific KSAs a person needs to perform a specific job successfully. Occupational competencies help to:

- ◆ Define workplace performance
- ◆ Design competency-based curriculum
- ◆ Define the requirements for a credential or a license

## TASK ANALYSIS

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**Task analysis** is a method of identifying which specific occupational competencies are needed to perform a job. Task analysis examines a job, breaks it down into small components, and describes the particular KSAs and resources needed to perform the job. A task analysis defines job prerequisites.

## JOB PREREQUISITES

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**Job prerequisites** are the education and skills a person must possess before he or she is able to perform a job. Job prerequisites are listed in job descriptions and classified ads. Part of the hiring process includes determining if an applicant possesses the prerequisite job skills necessary to do the job successfully.



**FIGURE 1.** Mechanics must pass strict certification tests before working on a car.

## Methods for Identifying Occupational Competencies

Occupational competencies and applications can be examined via the organizational perspective or the employee perspective.

## AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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The employer must identify the occupational competencies necessary to do a particular job. Task analysis is sometimes used by the employer to identify occupational competencies.

## AN EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE

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Employers determine to what degree applicants possess the occupational competencies necessary to complete a job. Employers often accomplish this task by testing applicants. Certification programs are another method by which applicants can prove that they possess necessary occupational competencies. Obtaining a certification implies that an applicant has completed a test to verify competency of certain occupational skills.

## SAMPLE APPLICATION SCENARIO

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A person who wishes to teach career and technical education in Pennsylvania, for example, must complete a special certification process called the “Occupational Competency Assessment” through Pennsylvania State University. Since career and technical education focuses on teaching specialized skills related to repairing cars or working with electricity, those who teach the subjects must possess the appropriate skills and competencies related to being an auto technician or an electrician.

Through Penn State’s Occupational Competency Assessment program, educators who pass the test are able to prove that they possess the occupational competencies necessary for teaching career and technical education in Pennsylvania: <http://voc.ed.psu.edu/projects/OCA/index.html>. This is just an example of one state, and each state differs in its approach and requirements. So investigate the requirements for your state.

## A Human Resource Management System (HRMS)

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Human resource management system (HRMS) produces many benefits as it relates to occupational competencies. These benefits are project teams, employee profile maintenance, and diagnostics.

## HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (HRMS)

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**Human capital** is the cumulative value of occupational competencies held by an organization; it is the power of the people’s talent used to accomplish strategies and goals in the organization. A **human resource management system (HRMS)** is a technology system used to inventory, search, and configure human capital according to the organization’s needs.

### *Project Team Selection*

- ◆ Project teams continually convene and adjourn as new projects are begun and completed, especially in a large organization.
- ◆ An HRMS easily selects and moves employees to new project teams based on the occupational competencies required by the project.

## Employee Profiles

Employee profiles are maintained in an HRMS.

- ◆ Many employee profiles are maintained and updated by employees as an impetus for them to take ownership of developing new occupational competencies and of updating their HRMS profile.
- ◆ As employees attain new occupational competencies and list them in the HRMS, the HRMS creates potential new opportunities for working on different jobs, projects, and teams within the organization.

## HRMS AS A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

- ◆ As organizations re-evaluate the success and failures of business goals and strategies, the HRMS can be used as a diagnostic tool for assessing if the organization has the necessary occupational competencies to support new strategies.
- ◆ The HRMS can be used to help determine new business strategies and goals as a company evaluates if its present human capital is sufficient to pursue new potential strategies. A university, for instance, wants to add a conversational French language course to the Foreign Language Department. As part of the decision-making process, the department would need to evaluate the level of competency of its foreign language faculty with respect to conversational French. How many of the current faculty speak and could teach a conversational French course? Following the evaluation of the current human capital, the department would decide one of three things: go, no go, or hire. Therefore, the current human capital is available to teach the course; the human capital to teach the course is not available; or to teach the course, additional faculty would need to be hired.



**FIGURE 2.** HRMS are helpful for keeping track of employee profiles.

## Summary:



The concept of KSAs (knowledge, skills, and abilities) is an excellent conceptual launching point for understanding occupational competencies, which are the specific KSAs a person needs to perform a specific job successfully. Task analysis is a method of identifying which specific occupational competencies are needed to per-



form a job. Job prerequisites are the education and skills a person must possess before he or she is able to perform a job.

Occupational competencies and applications can be examined via the organizational perspective or the employee perspective. Human resource management system (HRMS) produces many benefits as it relates to occupational competencies, such as project teams, employee profile maintenance, and diagnostics.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. List two questions an organization must answer when considering assigning an employee to a particular job.
2. List three tasks performed by a human resource management system (HRMS).
3. What are KSAs, and how do they relate to occupational competencies?
4. Define “task analysis.”
5. Define “occupational competencies.”

## Expanding Your Knowledge:



Research the concept of organizational development and change. You can conduct research online, or go to your local bookstore and browse the business section for this topic. You may want to look at resources by Edward Lawler and Christopher Worley, such as *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness*. Create a PowerPoint on your findings to share with your class.

## Web Links:



### Occupational Competency Assessment Program,

<http://voc.ed.psu.edu/projects/OCA/index.html>

### About the Field of Organization Development

[http://managementhelp.org/org\\_chng/od-field/OD\\_defn.htm](http://managementhelp.org/org_chng/od-field/OD_defn.htm)

### Identifying Occupational Competencies

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:8oM0Xqb\\_01cJ:www.agriscience.msu.edu/6000/6401/6401a/6401Aoccupationalcompetencies.ppt+occupational+competencies&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:8oM0Xqb_01cJ:www.agriscience.msu.edu/6000/6401/6401a/6401Aoccupationalcompetencies.ppt+occupational+competencies&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us)

### Human Resource Management Systems

<http://www.adp.com/solutions/employer-services/professional-employer-organization/small-business/peo-overview/human-resource-management-system.aspx>