

INTERNATIONAL LIFE SAVING FEDERATION

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LIFESAVING POSITION STATEMENT – LPS 21

COMPETENCY

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Competency is demonstrated when an individual can consistently apply their skills and knowledge to a standard set by the workplace. It includes the ability to transfer and apply these skills and knowledge to new situations and environments. All lifeguards need to be competent in every aspect of the taught curriculum prior to being unsupervised.

BACKGROUND

To successfully design programs of instruction which will allow people to accomplish specified tasks in any field of endeavor we must first define competency. That is, we must define what it means to be competent. Lifeguarding qualifications endorsed through the International Life Saving Federation have been developed based on the application of a competency-based format to maximize the relevance to member organizations throughout the world.¹

In a general sense competency is a combination of attributes underlying some aspect of successful professional performance² through achievement of a specific outcome. A person who is described or recognized as being competent has the attributes to enable them to perform tasks and skills to an appropriate pre-determined standard.

The objective is to ensure the focus on an individual becoming able to consistently apply their skills and knowledge effectively in a vocational application (be it voluntary or paid) or in the case of ILS member to satisfy the standards that have been developed through expert consensus and/or research in the field.

From a vocational perspective competency-based training systems have been adopted through the establishment of national Qualifications Frameworks³ in forty-seven countries since the latter part of the Twentieth Century with many adopting such frameworks in Europe since the outcomes of the Bologna Process in 1999.⁴

STATEMENT

1. Competency is achieved when an individual can consistently demonstrate specified levels of skill, knowledge, and understanding. It involves both the ability to perform in a range of applications or context; and the capacity to transfer knowledge and skills to new tasks and situations.
2. The International Lifesaving Federation strongly recommends that all rescue organizations involved in the training of lifeguards, first responders and the lay public should use the definition and nomenclature (terms) as agreed upon by the international community as a basis for useful communication and include it in their glossary.
3. All lifeguards should be able to demonstrate competency in all aspects of the taught curriculum

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE

This document is based on expert consensus as noted above and through the reference to the literature listed below.

DISCUSSION

The principal purpose of the recommendations are to establish consistency in the development of competency based qualifications (i.e. training and assessment) for the benefit of ILS members, both in terms of nomenclature and as guidelines for any recognition of prior learning (RPL) that may be incorporated into training plans and/or activities. These recommendations are intended to improve the clarity of training and qualification. Improved clarity and comparability of future training will advance the development of lifeguarding competencies knowledge base throughout member organizations.

It is essential that the minimum requirements as set out on the ILS website in relation to lifeguard training be followed and that lifeguards demonstrate competency in all elements of that training, that is, be deemed competent in all assessable criteria.

Entrustable Professional Activity (EPA)

EPA is a unit of professional practice, defined as a task or responsibility that a trainee is entrusted to perform unsupervised once he/she has attained sufficient competence in the activity. EPAs are context-dependent and have its basis in competence-based learning. Lifeguard training organisations should make sure that lifeguards that they have deemed competent, can perform that activity unsupervised before competency is awarded.

Certain elements such as fitness, ability to perform a rescue in the environment that the lifeguard operates within, and CPR must be recertified (deemed competent) on a regular basis (Refer Lifesaving Position Statement LPS-09 “Recertification for Beach and Open Water Lifeguards”).

POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The author has no conflict of interest with the stakeholder industry, technology, persons or organizations that are identified and/or impacted by the position statement.

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APPROVAL

Approved by ILS Education Committee and ILS Rescue Commission December 2021