

NOS Development

Functional Analysis and NOS Development

The functional analysis gives us a framework for an area of work – we now know what employers expect people to be able to do. The next stage is to identify relevant NOS. This is likely to involve a combination of:

- (1) Finding existing NOS that are acceptable to the sector/occupation and where necessary making minor amendments (known as 'tailoring')
- (2) Developing new NOS to meet these requirements, if no existing NOS are acceptable

Finding Existing NOS

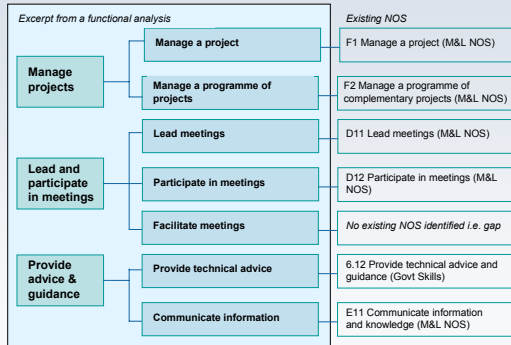
In order to identify existing NOS you will need to look at the descriptions on the right hand side of the functional analysis and see if they match to any existing NOS. This can be done by:

- Searching NOS databases and on-line NOS based tools
- Going to specific Standards Setting Organisation websites and checking NOS suites they have developed
- Talking to colleagues who are/have been involved in developing NOS

All available NOS may be found on the NOS Directory at www.ukstandards.org.uk

Tip: The results of your work may look like a matching exercise and you can [click here](#) to see an example.

Example of links between a functional analysis and existing NOS



Developing New NOS

Once you have identified functions for which there are no existing NOS you can begin to work with employers to develop new NOS

Every NOS must have the following content:

1. A unique reference number for each NOS - based on the functional analysis
2. A NOS title – which clearly and accurately describes the function
3. Overview - describing what the NOS is about and who it is for
4. Performance criteria - specifying the standard of performance required when carrying out the function
5. Knowledge and understanding – specifying the knowledge and understanding an individual must possess in order to perform competently
6. Technical data - the required technical data for the NOS (e.g. date of approval)

NOS Titles

When drafting the NOS titles it is important to use language that:

- is accurate and descriptive – *it should be fairly easy for someone from the sector to see from the title what the NOS is about*
- continues to follow the (functional analysis) convention of verb, object and, where necessary, context/condition
- points to an outcome which is valued by employers and is observable and assessable

Examples:

- Place and finish non-specialist concrete (Construction Skills)
- Arrest, detain or report individuals (Skills for Justice)
- Obtain venous blood samples (Skills for Health)

Note: The draft NOS titles will be based on the functions in the functional analysis where there are no existing NOS.

Performance Criteria

The NOS title tells us what the person should be able to do, but how can we tell if they are doing it to a standard that employers expect? This is what the performance criteria are for. They set the standard of performance.

The performance criteria should give someone who knows about the occupation a way of deciding whether the person's performance is 'good enough' or 'not yet good enough'.

Performance Criteria

Example

NOS Title: Deal with the arrival of customers

Performance Criteria

You must be able to:

1. Assist the customer to feel welcome in the hotel
2. Identify the customer's requirements
3. Ensure customer details are correct on the booking system
4. Offer alternatives for any services that are not available
5. Make sure the registration document is completed as required
6. Give accurate information to the customer about their room and its location
7. Promote the services and facilities of your organisation

Performance Criteria

We can develop performance criteria by continuing the functional analysis process. When we know what the NOS title is, we can ask 'What needs to happen to achieve this?'

The phrase 'you must be able to' is often used as a lead-in to the performance criteria in a NOS

Performance Criteria

Performance criteria should not

- be a list of tasks
- include knowledge and understanding
- describe how the function is carried out (they focus on outcomes)

Exercise One

Think about the following function:

'Produce a written report'

What needs to happen to achieve this in the context of your work?

- Make some notes about the main things that need to take place to produce a written report
- Try to summarise and group the activities you have identified, rather than create a step by step list
- Turn your notes into performance criteria (refer to previous example) that describe the standard to which the work is performed

Tip: Once you have drafted the performance criteria review each statement to see if could be done badly and still meet the standard. Appropriate qualitative words need to be incorporated in each of the statements to rectify this.

I have tried the exercise for a different function and you can click here to see the result: [Exercise One](#)

Maintain grass areas (e.g. mowing a lawn or strimming an embankment)

Step One – I made some notes about the things someone would have to do:

- Get the lawn mower and/or strimmer
- Remove any items from the lawn or area
- Make sure your wearing proper clothes (someone I know lost the end of his big toe because he was wearing sandals)
- Cut the grass in a neat and careful way
- Get rid of grass clippings
- Put the equipment back in the shed
- Have a drink to celebrate a job well done! (not essential)

Step Two – I drafted some possible performance criteria based on the above notes

You must be able to:

- Obtain the correct equipment for the work and ensure it is fit for use [is 'correct' the right word, there may be a variety of equipment types available?]
- Wear suitable clothing for the work to maintain your health and safety
- Ensure the grass area is free of any obstructions and hazards [I was thinking of small objects as well as kids toys that need to be moved]
- Use all equipment in accordance with manufacturers instructions [the lawn mower might be electric or two stroke and there would be some different safety requirements as a result]
- Cut the grass to the required length and remove clippings to an appropriate location [not sure about 'appropriate' location, does it set a standard?]
- Thoroughly clean equipment after use and return it to storage
- What about weeding and the use of pesticides?

Step Three – I added some thoughts to the end of the performance criteria in red text to help with further development. These could be taken forward to group discussions and further development work to ensure the final draft Performance Criteria are suitable for use in all contexts

Knowledge and Understanding

National Occupational Standards include essential knowledge and understanding statements that usually cover:

- Facts (for example, different types of equipment, health and safety requirements, different types of customer needs)
- Principles/Rationale (for example, the reasons why cooked and uncooked meat must be stored separately; why customers should be made to feel welcome in the hotel; why a registration card needs to be completed correctly)
- Methods (for example, how to avoid cross contamination, how to meet the needs of a customer in a wheel chair, how design a fitness programme for someone with a history of heart disease)

Knowledge and Understanding

Knowledge and understanding is often preceded by a 'lead-in' statement which says 'You must know and understand'.

Here are some examples of knowledge and understanding (from 'Deal with the arrival of customers'):

- Why customers should be made to feel welcome in the hotel and the effect this has on their attitude to the business and the likelihood of repeat business and recommendations
- The different techniques to help the customer feel welcome in the hotel and how to do this in different situations
- The types of general requirements that customers visiting the hotel are likely to have and how to meet each of these
- Legal requirements for registering customers at a hotel, including requirements for data protection

Exercise Two

Think about the function from the last exercise:

'Produce a written report'

What would an individual need to know and understand in order to carry out this work?

- (a) Revisit the draft performance criteria that you came up with
- (b) Work through each one and make some notes on what the individual would need to know and understand
- (c) Turn your notes into descriptions of the knowledge and understanding that is required

Tip: Try asking these sorts of questions: What is it the individual needs to know? Why are they writing reports? How should they be writing reports? These questions will help with the development of the NOS, and also the knowledge and understanding.

I have tried the exercise for a different function and you can [click here](#) to see the result: Exercise Two

Maintain grass areas (e.g. mowing a lawn or strimming an embankment)

Step One – In the last exercise I came up with the following draft performance criteria (incomplete). Against each of these I have made some notes about possible knowledge and understanding (in red).

You must be able to:

- Obtain the correct equipment for the work and ensure it is fit for use – knowledge of the equipment available to do the job, any other materials that are required, how to check the equipment is in a suitable condition for use
- Wear suitable clothing for the work to maintain your health and safety – knowledge of the right kind of clothing to wear from a safety point of view
- Ensure the grass area is free of any obstructions and hazards – knowledge of the grass area to be covered, the types of hazards and obstructions that might be present in long grass and how to deal with them
- Use all equipment in accordance with manufacturers instructions and legislation knowledge of manufacturers instructions and any legal requirements, how to use the equipment correctly
- Cut the grass to the required length and remove clippings to an appropriate location – knowledge of how to remove clippings and how they should be disposed of
- Thoroughly clean equipment after use and return it to storage – knowledge of how to clean equipment and how/where it is stored

Step Two – I have then taken the notes about knowledge and understanding and tried to put them in a more logical order:

You must know and understand

- the equipment available for the work and any other materials/resources that are required
- manufacturers instructions and any legal requirements
- how to check the equipment is in a suitable condition for use
- the right kind of clothing to wear from a health and safety point of view
- the hazards and obstructions that might be present and how to deal with them
- how to use the equipment correctly
- how to remove clippings and how they should be disposed of
- how to clean equipment and how/where it is stored

The Importance of Plain English

When developing NOS it is important to remember that the final product must be readable. This can be achieved by:

- avoiding long sentences and especially sentences with several clauses (parts)
- using words your readers are likely to understand
- avoiding 'flowery' language and editing out the words that are not strictly necessary
- using the active voice – e.g. (you) 'prepare the ingredients' rather than 'the ingredients are prepared'
- using vertical lists to break up complicated text
- reducing cross referencing to a minimum
- being consistent in the words you use

Optional NOS Components

Standards setting organisations may also add other components which are considered important in their sector. These may include:

1. Elements – where the NOS are broken down into smaller areas of activity
2. Scope (or Range) – that provide a context across which the work must take place
3. Behaviours – that indicate the behaviours that are required for the work
4. Values – that underpin the work (e.g. equality, confidentiality)
5. Skills – that are required to perform competently (e.g. negotiation skills)
6. Glossary -

One last thing

National Occupational Standards are employer led. They are developed by working with employers, practitioners and other stakeholders to define the content. Like a functional analysis they will go through several stages of drafting and are rarely 'right first time'.

What is considered good practice by one individual or group, may not be considered good practice by another. You will need to work through these differences of opinion to arrive at a consensus view. This requires a range of people skills (e.g. negotiation, facilitation, communication) as well as technical writing skills. It is only through this type of development process that the NOS can become fit for use in an occupational area or sector.
