MEMORANDUM FOR SERVICE ACQUISITION EXECUTIVES
DIRECTOR, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF (JCS J4)
DIRECTORS, ACQUISITION CAREER MANAGEMENT (DACM)
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE CONTRACT MANAGEMENT AGENCY
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INFORMATION SYSTEMS AGENCY
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE SECURITY SERVICES
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY
DIRECTOR, HUMAN CAPITAL INITIATIVES (HCI)
DIRECTOR, MISSILE DEFENSE AGENCY
PRESIDENT, DEFENSE ACQUISITION UNIVERSITY (DAU)

SUBJECT: Life Cycle Logistics Acquisition Workforce Competency Survey using the Defense Competency Assessment Tool [DCPAS Authority from Report Control Symbol DD-P&R (BE) 2475]

I am pleased to announce that Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAWF) civilians assigned to the Life Cycle Logistics (LCL) career field have an opportunity to participate in a survey that will validate LCL career field competency models, assess civilian competencies, and identify proficiency levels across the LCL workforce. Using the online DoD Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT), the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Services (DCPAS) office will administer the survey to all LCL civilians regardless of their occupational series. The survey will open on March 19, 2018, and will close at midnight on April 27, 2018.

A group of LCL subject matter experts developed the LCL Career Field Competency Model through a series of panels facilitated by DCPAS industrial psychologists. Survey participation is voluntary and confidential. On March 19, DCPAS will begin sending civilian LCLs an e-mail inviting their participation in the survey and containing the link to the tool. The survey should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete and will assess competency frequency, difficulty, and criticality. To complete the survey, both the employee and his/her first-line supervisor will individually rate the employee's proficiency in a set of LCL career field competencies. Supervisors will also identify the target proficiency for the position.

The assessment survey is intended to integrate competency into the human resources life cycle. It is not a performance management tool, and results are not linked to performance ratings. Individual survey results will be available to the employee and first-line supervisor only. I encourage employees and supervisors to review the results and discuss options for future
development and career broadening experiences. Only aggregate results will be reported to the LCL Functional Leader to inform workforce planning strategies.

I strongly encourage workforce participation in the competency assessment survey to validate workforce planning and management tools. Attached are a DCAT guide for employees and a separate guide for supervisors; both include a series of frequently asked questions.

My point of contact for questions concerning the LCL Acquisition Workforce competency assessment using DCAT, please contact Ms. Denise Little at denise.a.little2.civ@mail.mil, 703-614-3838.

Terence G. Emmert
Acting Life Cycle Logistics Functional Leader

Attachments:
As stated
Defense Competency Assessment Tool

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT REPORT
INTERPRETATION GUIDE
for Employees

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

DCAT Overview

The Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT) is a Department of Defense (DoD) competency tool used to assess civilian employees’ competency gaps and proficiency levels in the technical and non-technical competencies within their occupational series.

You were invited to participate in the recent DCAT process and completed an assessment of your proficiency levels in competencies specific to your current occupational series. As part of the DCAT process, you were also asked to identify your supervisor and invite him or her to assess your proficiency levels as well. Since the assessment was confidential, only you and your supervisor will have access to your DCAT competency assessment results. The overall DCAT results will be rolled up, or aggregated, to meet DoD Congressional legislative requirements in Title 10 U.S.C., section 115b. This legislation requires the DoD to biennially report to Congress on the critical skills and competencies that will be needed in the future within the civilian employee workforce to support mission requirements. In addition, DCAT competency assessment results will be made available to participating employees and supervisors to review the results and facilitate career planning.

You are strongly encouraged to meet with your supervisor to discuss the results of the assessment and develop a plan to close identified competency gaps and strengthen your existing skill sets. Please note that the DCAT competency assessment is only for developmental purposes and will not be used to rate performance.

Purpose of this Guide

DoD defines a competency as an observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics needed to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully (adapted from Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1430.16, Volume 410, Growing Civilian Leaders, November 19, 2009).

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a resource for interpreting your DCAT competency assessment results and guidance on how DCAT feedback can be used to inform your career development activities.
INTERPRETING DCAT COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Accessing Your Report

To access your individual DCAT competency assessment report, please follow the steps below. Please note that both the employee and supervisor must have completed the DCAT assessment for the report to be available.

1) Login to the DCAT (http://dcat.cpms.osd.mil) using your Common Access Card (CAC).
2) Select “My Competencies” from main navigation bar located in the top left of the page.
3) Select “My Report” from the secondary navigation bar located in the top middle of the page.

DCAT Report Elements

Below is an example of a DCAT competency assessment report accessible within the tool and descriptions of the information provided in each column.

Example of DCAT Competency Assessment Report for the GS-201, Human Resources Specialist, Occupational Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Name</th>
<th>Employee Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Supervisor Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Target Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Criticality Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Classification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Relations</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits and Work Life Programs</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Workforce Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR Information Systems Application</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competency Name** – The title, or name, of the competency that was assessed.

**Employee Proficiency Rating** – Self-assessment of the employee’s current proficiency level. Proficiency ratings indicate the degree to which the employee performs a competency and are assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.

**Supervisor Proficiency Rating** – Rating of the employee’s current proficiency level provided by his or her supervisor. Proficiency ratings indicate the degree to which employee performed a competency and are assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.
Variance – The difference between the employee and supervisor proficiency ratings. Positive scores occur when an employee’s self-rating is greater than his or her supervisor’s rating. Negative scores occur when an employee’s self-rating is less than his or her supervisor’s rating.

Target Proficiency Rating – The proficiency level required for effective performance for the position. The target proficiency rating is provided by the employee’s supervisor and assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.

Competency Gap – The difference between the supervisor proficiency rating and the target proficiency rating. Positive scores, or competency surpluses, occur when a supervisor proficiency rating is greater than the target proficiency rating. Negative scores, or competency gaps, occur when a supervisor proficiency rating is less than the target proficiency rating.

Criticality Index – The ranked order of competencies that are most critical to the work performed for the position and grade level. The Criticality Index is based upon three factors derived from questions in the DCAT: the supervisor importance rating, if the competency is required upon entry into the position, and if the competency distinguishes value between a superior and average performer. Using these three values a composite score, or index, is calculated and can be used to rank competencies from most to least critical.

General Questions to Consider

When reviewing your DCAT competency assessment results, you should consider the following questions:

- To what extent do your general impressions differ from those you had prior to receiving your DCAT competency assessment results?
- What are your relative highs and lows?
- What surprises, if any, did you have?
- What other observations do you have?
3.0 FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK

This feedback framework is an adaptation of the Johari Window and can assist you in interpreting your DCAT competency assessment results. The Johari Window is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals (i.e., employees and their supervisors). The framework contains four categories that represent the interaction between your self-awareness and your supervisor’s perceptions. Determining where competencies fall within the framework can help you build self-awareness and gain a better understanding of how your supervisor perceives you.

- Competencies in quadrants B and C confirm your perspectives.
- Competencies in A and D identify areas of disagreement, or differences between your ratings and your supervisor's ratings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback Category</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Blind Spots**   | These are areas where you rated a competency higher than your supervisor did. If your DCAT results indicate a competency gap, it could be an area targeted for improvement.  
Blind spots provide an opportunity for discussion with your supervisor to understand the rating differences and determine how to reconcile the differences. Your supervisor may not be fully aware of your competency-related behavior or you may not be as good at demonstrating competency-related behaviors as you believe yourself to be. Remember, the feedback you receive from your DCAT results provides you with a new perspective about how to translate your knowledge of a competency into actual behaviors. The greater the discrepancy between your ratings and your supervisor’s ratings, the more important it is to determine whether to adjust your perceptions after a discussion, and in turn, your behavior. |
| **Known Strengths** | These are areas where your ratings are relatively high, your supervisor’s ratings are equally high, and there was not a competency gap. You are confident demonstrating behaviors related to these competencies and your supervisor sees the behaviors as well. |
| **Known Areas for Improvement** | This indicates those competencies where your ratings are relatively low, your supervisor’s ratings are equally low, and a competency gap exists. You are aware of your shortcomings in these areas. Your supervisor also sees the need to develop/improve proficiency in these areas.  
In situations where your ratings and supervisor ratings were low, but a competency gap was not reported, you should determine whether there is a need to improve your proficiency (e.g., possible career advancement) or if your current proficiency levels are satisfactory. |
| **Hidden Strengths** | If you rated a competency lower than your supervisor and there is not a competency gap, you may have misinterpreted the competency or you may be better at demonstrating competency-related behaviors than you realize. If the difference in ratings is large, you may need to adjust your perception of your proficiency level after a discussion with your supervisor. It is important to recognize your strengths and draw upon them as you strive to improve in other areas. |
4.0 FEEDBACK EXERCISE

The following section provides a template for analyzing your DCAT results within the context of the framework described in the previous section. Please refer to your competency assessment results and complete the following steps.

1) Look at the criticality index and write in the top ten competencies from highest to lowest. The competency with the highest criticality index score should be #1.
2) Look at the Gap scores and insert ✓ if the Gap score is less than or equal to -1.0.
3) Look at the variance scores for each competency and identify the appropriate feedback category.
   - Variance score is zero and no gap was identified = Known Strength
   - Variance score is less than or equal to -1.0 and no gap was identified = Hidden Strength
   - Variance score is zero and a gap was identified = Known Areas for Improvement
   - Variance score is greater than or equal to +1.0 and a gap was identified = Blind Spot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Feedback Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to Think About

- How do your competency gaps rank in terms of criticality?
- Where are the disparities between your supervisor’s ratings and your ratings (i.e., blind spots or hidden strengths)?
- Given your current role and goals, which competencies require the most attention?
- Which competencies do you feel matter most to your future career plans?
Feedback Framework Summary
Please use this space to summarize your feedback framework categories. Write in the competency names in the appropriate quadrant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blind Spots</th>
<th>Known Strengths</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known Areas for Improvement</th>
<th>Hidden Strengths</th>
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</table>

Things to Think About
- What are your key takeaways?
- What are the specific areas you want to focus on improving?
- What are the strengths you want to capitalize on?
5.0 PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Given what you have learned from your competency assessment results, what actions will you take to help you achieve your short or long-term career goals? There is not a right or wrong answer to this question. However, it is critical your plan contain actionable steps to keep you motivated and moving forward. The following section provides general tips/suggestions for taking responsibility for your own career using the results of your competency assessment to build on your strengths, determine areas of improvement, and inform your development plans.

Owning Your Career Development

Although DoD has a genuine interest in the professional development of its civilian workforce, the responsibility for advancing your career is really your own. You are encouraged to use your competency results as an opportunity to take control of your career. The following are some practical steps you can take after receiving your DCAT competency assessment results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DCAT-Related Career Development Steps</th>
<th>Actions/Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Become aware of both your strengths and areas for improvement.</td>
<td>Study your competency assessment results and spend some time observing yourself in light of the feedback you received. Your results provide you with information; it is now up to you to decide what to do with it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assess your own level of commitment to improve.</td>
<td>Changing one’s behavior is a challenging task. Are you ready to make these changes? Why do you feel it will be worth the effort? It has to matter to you, or it will not happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Discuss your DCAT results with your supervisor.</td>
<td>Taking the initiative to schedule a meeting with your supervisor lets him or her know you are taking the results seriously and are seeking their input and advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pick a small number of behaviors on which to focus.</td>
<td>If you try to address too many areas at once, you will be setting yourself up for failure. View your assessment results as an opportunity to concentrate on one or two areas that are in the greatest need of your attention. Whether you focus on competencies with the largest gaps, those competencies identified as most critical, or some combination will ultimately depend on your individual situation. Therefore, it is important to discuss prioritization with your supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Set timelines and milestones, and check-up on yourself.</td>
<td>Setting goals and measuring progress are important elements of any successful career development effort.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### DCAT-Related Career Development Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Actions/Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Make sure your goals are realistic and achievable.</strong></td>
<td>You do not have to engage in a radical overhaul. Focus on making a noticeable, incremental improvement that will help you grow professionally and achieve your organization’s objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Do not ignore non-technical competencies.</strong></td>
<td>Your competency results focus on the technical competencies required to perform effectively within your current occupational series. While you are encouraged to use DCAT feedback to help guide your professional development, do not ignore non-technical competencies (i.e., DoD Leadership Competencies).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Building New Strengths

Improving your proficiency levels in competencies can be a challenging and time consuming process. In most cases, mastering competency-related behaviors is not as simple as participating in a training course, attending a professional conference, or reading a self-help book. Improvements require a multi-faceted approach and a sustained level of effort. Below are tips/suggestions that can help you build new strengths and improve your competency proficiency levels.

### Tips for Building New Strengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips for Building New Strengths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seek advice and use others’ expertise.</strong></td>
<td>You are not the only one who has dealt with a particular issue. Ask others for advice based on their experiences. Consider finding a mentor who can serve as a role model in the competencies you want to focus on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Watch others.</strong></td>
<td>Many of us learn effectively by observing others’ behaviors. This can occur in a formal setting, (e.g., job shadowing) or more informally during work related activities (e.g., staff meeting). You should try to observe individuals who are either very strong or very weak in a particular competency you have chosen to develop. By watching how others react to these individuals, you can gain insight about the kinds of behaviors you want to avoid, adopt, or strengthen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask for “real time” help and support.</strong></td>
<td>Tell people that you are working on improving a particular competency or behavior and ask for their support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Try new approaches and learn from experience.</strong></td>
<td>Watch for situations that demonstrate the behaviors for the targeted competency and take the opportunity to practice them. Then learn from your successes and your mishaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tips for Building New Strengths</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observe and learn from others’ verbal and non-verbal responses to your behavior.</strong></td>
<td>There are many clues being given to you every day that you may not be recognizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Find a coach/mentor to support you over an extended period (e.g., six to eight months).</strong></td>
<td>Some behaviors have become habits, while others are relatively simple to address. Either way, feedback from an objective person can be valuable. To address some of your more ingrained behaviors, you may require the aid of an experienced, knowledgeable and objective person who can help you develop a course of action with realistic and attainable goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seek out training opportunities, but be selective.</strong></td>
<td>Remember that training courses are the first step towards developing your proficiency in new competencies. Formal training should be combined with application of what was learned in the course to the work place. Actively seek feedback on your progress, and other developmental assignments from your supervisor, coach, or mentor to assess your progress. When selecting courses, look for opportunities that provide more than just general context, allow the opportunity to practice the new competencies, and are taught by instructors who have practical experience with the targeted competencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Incorporating DCAT Feedback into your Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

DoD employees are required to complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) on an annual basis. For more information about this requirement, please refer to DoDI 1400.25, Volume 410, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Training, Education and Professional Development, September 25, 2013.

IDPs enable employees to take ownership of their career development, provide an administrative mechanism for identifying and tracking development needs and plans, and assist in planning for the training and development requirements. You can use your DCAT competency results to inform your IDP by:

- Examining your current competency gaps and working with your supervisor to identify and prioritize competency gaps that should be closed.
- Identifying competency development areas that support your professional goals.
- Identifying formal and informal learning opportunities (e.g., training courses, rotational assignments, special projects, or working groups) that build your technical proficiency.
- Including targeted competencies in both your long-term (3-5 years) and short-term (1-year) goals in your IDP.
6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The DCAT process provides DoD with the opportunity to evaluate the critical competencies needed now and in the future within the civilian employee workforce to support mission requirements. DCAT results also help civilian employees determine what they do well and where they can target areas for improvement. The feedback employees receive from their DCAT assessment results can provide insights that lead to identifying one's preferred job, future aspiration, or, at the very least, information about one's strengths. In addition, participation in the DCAT process provides an opportunity for employees and supervisors to begin/continue an on-going dialogue regarding future training and development options. This guide should be used as a resource for interpreting your DCAT competency assessment results and discussing career development strategies with your supervisor.
## APPENDIX A - DOD COMPETENCY PROFICIENCY LEVELS AND DEFINITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Proficiency Level Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5                 | Expert • Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations  
                     • Serves as a key resource and advises others |
| 4                 | Advanced • Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations  
                     • Generally requires little or no guidance |
| 3                 | Intermediate • Applies the competency in difficult situations  
                     • Requires occasional guidance |
| 2                 | Basic • Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations  
                     • Requires frequent guidance |
| 1                 | Awareness • Applies the competency in the simplest situations  
                     • Requires close and extensive guidance |
Q1: What is the Defense Competency Assessment Tool?

A1: The Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT) is a Department-wide competency assessment tool to validate occupational competency models and assess civilian employees’ proficiency levels in the competencies within their occupational series.

Q2: How will occupational series’ competencies be assessed?

A2: DoD civilian employees will be invited to conduct a self-assessment of their proficiency levels in their occupational competencies through the DCAT. Both the employee and their immediate supervisor will assess the employee’s current proficiency level, additionally the supervisor will assess the proficiency level required for the position. Upon completion of the self-assessment and the supervisor’s assessment it is encouraged that the employee and supervisor meet to discuss the results of the assessment and future training and development. To facilitate the employee/supervisor discussion DCPAS has develop the DCAT Employee and Supervisor Guides.

Q3: What is a competency?

A3: DoD defines a competency as an observable, measurable set of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that are needed for successful job performance. See DoD’s competency framework and taxonomy below:

Five-Tiered Competency Framework

Competency Components

Each competency in the Five-Tier Framework is described by the following components:

Tier 1: Core Competencies
Apply across DOD regardless of component or occupation, e.g., DOD leadership competencies

Tier 2: Primary Occupational Competencies
Apply across discrete occupational series/functions, i.e., one or more functionally related occupations that share distinct, common technical qualifications, competencies, career paths, and progression patterns

Tier 3: Sub-Occupational Specialty Competencies*
Unique to sub-occupational specialty, e.g., set of geo-technical competencies within the civil engineering occupation

Tier 4: Component-Unique Competencies*
So unlike any of the other competencies identified that they exist at the component level and are unique to the context or environment in which the work is performed.

Tier 5: Position-Specific Competencies*
Required for a particular position within an occupation and are not addressed in the Tiers above, e.g., a specific civil engineer may require financial management competencies

Proficiency Levels (tied to assessments) indicate the degree to which employees performed a competency.
- Level 1 = Awareness
- Level 2 = Basic
- Level 3 = Intermediate
- Level 4 = Advanced
- Level 5 = Expert

* To be developed at a later date
Q4: How does the DCAT competency assessment process work?

A4: The Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) and Defense Manpower Data Center are responsible for the administration of DCAT. Civilian employees are invited by email to participate in their occupational series’ competency assessments. The invite will include a link to the DCAT tool. Personnel data in DCAT is auto-populated from the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) into the employee profile. Employees may add the name of their supervisor or do a global search for their supervisor’s name. This action generates a notice to the supervisor to assess their employee’s competency proficiency levels in DCAT.

**Employee then initiates the assessment:**

The employee conducts a self-assessment by rating his/her proficiency level in each of the competencies required for the position along with the level of importance for each competency. Once the employee has completed and submitted his/her self-assessment the supervisor is sent a system generated e-mail. Note: once the employee completes the assessment process, he/she will not be able to make further updates after the e-mail is sent to the supervisor.

**Supervisor assessment:**

Upon receipt of the system generated e-mail the supervisor assesses the employee’s proficiency level and importance level for each of the competencies required for the position. The supervisor will also identify if the individual competency is required now or in the future.

Q5: What are the benefits of competency assessments to civilian employees?

A5: Competencies benefit not only DoD but help our civilian employees determine what they do well and where they can target areas for improvement. A competency assessment allows employees to formally take stock of their areas of strength and areas for development.

*Additional benefits include:*

- **Providing a Focus for Future Development.** Competency assessment results allow the employee and supervisor to plan for future development or assignments.

- **Increasing Ongoing Dialogue with the Supervisor.** Participating in a competency assessment will provide an opportunity for the employee and supervisor to have informal discussions on future training and development options.

- **Informing Short- and Long-Term Career Decisions.** Self-assessments can provide insights that lead to identifying one's preferred job, future aspiration or, at the very least, information about one's strengths.

Q6: How will supervisors use competency assessment results?
Supervisors will use individual competency assessments results to discuss future training and development opportunities with their employees.

Q7: Who will see the self-assessment?

Only the employee and his/her supervisor will see the employee’s DCAT competency assessment results. Aggregate DCAT data will be used to meet legislative reporting requirements to Congress on the critical skills and competencies that are needed now and in the future within the civilian employee workforce to support mission requirements.

Q8: What will the Department do with competency assessment results in DCAT?

The results of the DCAT competency assessment will be used to develop strategies to close identified competency gaps and inform future training and development plans to effectively manage the Department’s civilian workforce.

Q9: How do competency assessments impact annual performance evaluations?

Competency assessments will have no impact on annual performance evaluations. The results of competency assessments should be used to identify future career and professional developmental opportunities.
Defense Competency Assessment Tool

COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT REPORT INTERPRETATION GUIDE
for Supervisors

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

DCAT Overview

The Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT) is a Department of Defense (DoD) competency tool used to assess civilian employees’ competency gaps and proficiency levels in the technical and non-technical competencies within their occupational series.

One of your direct reports was invited to participate in the recent DCAT process and completed an assessment of his or her proficiency in competencies specific to his or her current occupational series. As his or her supervisor, you were also invited to participate and provide ratings regarding your employee’s proficiency levels. Since the assessment was confidential, only you and your direct report will have access to his or her DCAT competency assessment results. The overall DCAT results will be rolled up, or aggregated, to meet DoD Congressional legislative requirements in Title 10 U.S.C., section 115b. This legislation requires the DoD to biennially report to Congress on the critical skills and competencies that will be needed in the future within the civilian employee workforce to support mission requirements.

You are strongly encouraged to meet with your employee to discuss the results of his or her assessment and develop a plan to close identified competency gaps and strengthen existing skill sets. Please note that the DCAT competency assessment is only for developmental purposes and should not be used to rate performance.

Purpose of this Guide

DoD defines a competency as an observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics needed to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully (adapted from Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1430.16, Growing Civilian Leaders, November 19, 2009).

The purpose of this guide is to provide supervisors with a resource for interpreting their employees’ DCAT results and using DCAT feedback to facilitate career development conversations.
2.0 INTERPRETING DCAT COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Accessing Your Employees Report

To access your employee’s DCAT competency assessment report, please follow the steps below. Please note that both the employee and supervisor must have completed the DCAT assessment for the report to be available.

1) Login to the DCAT (http://dcat.cpms.osd.mil) using your Common Access Card (CAC).
2) Select "Supervisor" from the main navigation bar located in the top left of the page.
3) Select "Reports" from the secondary navigation bar located in the top middle of the page.
4) Select the name of your employee from the list and select the "Submit" button.

DCAT Report Elements

Below is an example of a DCAT competency assessment report accessible within the tool and descriptions of the information provided in each column.

Example of DCAT Competency Assessment Report for the GS-201, Human Resources Specialist, Occupational Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Name</th>
<th>Employee Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Supervisor Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Target Proficiency Rating</th>
<th>Gap</th>
<th>Criticality Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Classification</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Relations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and Work Life Programs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Workforce Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Information Systems Application</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competency Name** – The title, or name, of the competency that was assessed.

**Employee Proficiency Rating** – Self-assessment of the employee’s current proficiency level. Proficiency ratings indicate the degree to which the employee performs a competency and are assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.

**Supervisor Proficiency Rating** – Rating of the employee’s current proficiency level provided by his or her supervisor. Proficiency ratings indicate the degree to which employee performed a competency and are assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.
**Variance** – The difference between the employee and supervisor proficiency ratings. Positive scores occur when an employee’s self-rating is greater than his or her supervisor’s rating. Negative scores occur when an employee’s self-rating is less than his or her supervisor’s rating.

**Target Proficiency Rating** – The proficiency level required for effective performance for the position. The target proficiency rating is provided by the employee’s supervisor and assessed on a 5-point scale (Level 1 = Awareness; Level 2 = Basic; Level 3 = Intermediate; Level 4 = Advanced; Level 5 = Expert). Proficiency level definitions are provided in Appendix A.

**Competency Gap** – The difference between the supervisor proficiency rating and the target proficiency rating. Positive scores, or competency surpluses, occur when a supervisor proficiency rating is greater than the target proficiency rating. Negative scores, or competency gaps, occur when a supervisor proficiency rating is less than the target proficiency rating.

**Criticality Index** – The ranked order of competencies that are most critical to the work performed for the position and grade level. The Criticality Index is based upon three factors derived from questions in the DCAT: the supervisor importance rating, if the competency is required upon entry into the position, and if the competency distinguishes value between a superior and average performer. Using these three values a composite score, or index, is calculated and can be used to rank competencies from most to least critical.
3.0 FEEDBACK FRAMEWORK

This feedback framework is an adaptation of the Johari Window and can assist in interpreting your employee’s DCAT competency assessment results. The Johari Window is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals (i.e., employees and their supervisors). The framework contains four categories that represent the interaction between your employee’s perceptions and your perceptions of him or her. Determining where competencies fall within the framework can help your employee build self-awareness and gain a better understanding of your supervisory perspective.

- Competencies that fall into quadrants B and C confirm your employee’s perspective.
- Competencies that fall into A and D identify areas of disagreement, or differences between your employee’s self-ratings and your ratings of him or her.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback Category</th>
<th>Category Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blind Spots</strong></td>
<td>These are areas where your employee rated a competency higher than you did. If the DCAT results indicate a competency gap, it could be an area your employee targets for improvement. Blinds spots provide an opportunity for discussion to understand the rating differences and determine how to reconcile the differences. You may not be fully aware of your employee’s competency-related behavior or s/he may not be as good at demonstrating competency-related behaviors as s/he believes himself or herself to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known Strengths</strong></td>
<td>These are areas where your employee’s self-ratings are relatively high, your ratings are equally high, and there was not a competency gap. Your employee is confident demonstrating behaviors related to these competencies and you see the behaviors as well. It is important to acknowledge your employee’s strengths so s/he can draw upon them as s/he strive to improve in other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Known Areas for Improvement</strong></td>
<td>These are areas where your employee’s self-rating was low, your ratings are equally low, and a competency gap exists. Your employee is aware of his or her shortcomings in these areas. As his or her supervisor, you also see the need to develop these behaviors. In situations where your employee’s self-rating and your rating are low, but a competency gap was not reported, you should determine whether there is a need for your employee to increase his or her proficiency (e.g., for potential career advancement) or if his or her current proficiency level is satisfactory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hidden Strengths</strong></td>
<td>If your employee’s rating is lower than your rating, and there is not a competency gap, one of you may have misinterpreted the competency or s/he may be better at demonstrating competency-related behaviors than s/he realizes. If the difference in ratings is large, you should help your employee adjust his or her perception after a clarifying discussion. It is important that your employees recognize their strengths so they can draw upon them as they strive to improve in other areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

As a supervisor, you are responsible for developing your employees. Supervisors should strive to provide their direct reports with feedback and opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods. This includes conducting regular and ongoing conversations with employees about career development activities in an open and collaborative manner. These conversations build trust and demonstrate a genuine interest in the employee’s development. Further, employees are more likely to feel committed to the organization when their supervisor is engaged and supportive of career development activities.

Difference between Career Development and Performance Management

It is important to differentiate between performance discussions and career development discussions. Supervisors should consider career development and performance discussions as two separate conversations. Discussions using the DCAT competency assessment MUST ONLY focus on the employee’s career development.

As a supervisor, it is important to:

- Share what you can about your career path and what you have learned along the way.
- Be open to questions your employees have about your experiences.
- Meet regularly to help them develop, improve, and update Individual Development Plans (IDPs) on a continual basis. For more information about this requirement, please refer to DoDI 1400.25, Volume 410, DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Training, Education and Professional Development, September 25, 2013.
- Provide mentoring and coaching opportunities.

Career Development Conversations

The following are examples of questions you can use in conversations with your employees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of Conversation</th>
<th>Possible Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Career Development    | • Based on your competency results, what competencies do you excel at?  
                        | • How do your strengths contribute to organizational results and success?  
                        | • Where are your competency gaps? Let me share some observations about your competency-related behaviors and how they contribute to the mission of the organization.  
                        | • In addition to the technical competencies addressed in your DCAT report, are there other competencies (i.e., DoD Leadership Competencies) you would like to focus on?  
                        | • Tell me about the projects you have worked that make you most proud.  
                        | • What activities in your job motivate you to excel? Which activities are most interesting to you?  
<pre><code>                    | • What are your short-term and long-term career goals? |
</code></pre>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of Conversation</th>
<th>Possible Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Career Awareness      | • Do you know what the organization’s goals/priorities are? If not, let me share those with you so that you can align your professional goals with those of the organization.  
• What projects or other responsibilities would you like to participate in to help you close your competency gaps?  
• What competencies would you like to improve your proficiency in to support your career goals?  
• Are there any divisions, offices, or work teams that you would like to network with? Would you like me to introduce you to my points of contact in these groups?  
• What are your career aspirations? |
| Goal Setting          | • How is your IDP coming along?  
• Can we incorporate your DCAT feedback into your IDP? Which competencies would you like to focus on?  
• It would be helpful to complete your IDP before our next meeting so we can explore development opportunities together.  
• How can I help you achieve your career goals? |
| Competency Development| • What developmental experiences might help you progress towards your competency-related career goals?  
• What education or training might help you reduce the competency gaps identified in your DCAT feedback?  
• Let us set up a follow-up meeting schedule so that we are checking in on your career development progress regularly.  
• How can I help you improve competency proficiency in your current role? |
Coaching Tips for Supervisors

Some employees may not feel comfortable fully sharing their career goals and aspirations with a supervisor. You can help put employees at ease by using the following tips:

- Explain how your role as a supervisor can help them with career development and planning.
- Share your own professional career stories, illustrating possible paths employees could consider while planning their future development.
- Assure them that discussing their goals candidly is confidential and will not affect their performance evaluation.
- Demonstrate your comfort with their exploration of opportunities outside their current role or team by openly discussing the possibilities.
- Be supportive of an employee’s goal to remain in his or her current position by identifying development opportunities and/or restructuring their current responsibilities. Developing “in place” can be an effective competency-building technique.
- Refer employees to other DoD professionals with whom they may feel more comfortable discussing opportunities and goals candidly.
- Encourage employees to seek mentors who may be able to assist with blind spots and/or other competency-building opportunities.
5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The DCAT process provides DoD with the opportunity to evaluate the critical competencies needed now and in the future within the civilian employee workforce to support mission requirements. DCAT results also help civilian employees determine what they do well and where they can target areas for improvement. The feedback employees receive from their DCAT assessment results can provide insights that lead to identifying one's preferred job, future aspiration or, at the very least, information about one's strengths. In addition, participation in the DCAT process provides an opportunity for employees and supervisors to begin/continue an on-going dialogue regarding future training and development options. Supervisors should use this guide as a resource for interpreting their employees’ competency assessment results and using DCAT feedback to facilitate career development conversations.
### APPENDIX A - DOD COMPETENCY PROFICIENCY LEVELS AND DEFINITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Proficiency Level Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Expert</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Serves as a key resource and advises others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Generally requires little or no guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applies the competency in difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Requires occasional guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Basic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Requires frequent guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Applies the competency in the simplest situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Requires close and extensive guidance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q1: What is the Defense Competency Assessment Tool?

A1: The Defense Competency Assessment Tool (DCAT) is a Department-wide competency assessment tool to validate occupational competency models and assess civilian employees’ proficiency levels in the technical and non-technical competencies within their occupational series.

Q2: Why has DoD established a competency based approach to strategic workforce management?

A2: 10 U.S.C. section 115b requires the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) to develop and implement a strategic workforce plan that includes an assessment of the critical skills and competencies needed now and in the future within the civilian workforce along with strategies to close competency and skill gaps.

Q3: What is a competency?

A3: DoD defines a competency as an observable, measurable set of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that are needed for successful job performance. See DoD’s competency framework and taxonomy below:

Five-Tiered Competency Framework

Tier focused on:

Tier 1: Core Competencies
Apply across DOD regardless of component or occupation, e.g., DOD leadership competencies

Tier 2: Primary Occupational Competencies
Apply across discrete occupational series/functions, i.e., one or more functionally related occupations that share distinct, common technical qualifications, competencies, career paths, and progression patterns

Tier 3: Sub-Occupational Specialty Competencies*
Unique to sub-occupational specialty, e.g., set of geo-technical competencies within the civil engineering occupation

Tier 4: Component-Unique Competencies*
So unlike any of the other competencies identified that they exist at the component level and are unique to the context or environment in which the work is performed.

Tier 5: Position-Specific Competencies*
Required for a particular position within an occupation and are not addressed in the Tiers above, e.g., a specific civil engineer may require financial management competencies

Competency Components

Each competency in the Five-Tier Framework is described by the following components:

- Competency Title
- Competency Definition
- Proficiency Level Definition/Illustration
- Job Tasks

Proficiency Levels (tied to assessments) indicate the degree to which employees performed a competency.

- Level 1 = Awareness
- Level 2 = Basic
- Level 3 = Intermediate
- Level 4 = Advanced
- Level 5 = Expert

* To be developed at a later date
Q4: How does the DCAT competency assessment process work?

A4: The Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) and Defense Manpower Data Center are responsible for the development and administration of DCAT. Civilian employees will receive an e-mail invitation to participate in their occupational series competency assessment. The invitation will include a link to the DCAT tool. Personnel data in DCAT is auto-populated from the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) into the employee profile. Employees may add the name of their supervisor or do a global search for their supervisor’s name. This action generates a notice to the supervisor to assess their employee’s competency proficiency levels in DCAT.

**Employee initiates the assessment:**

The employee conducts a self-assessment by rating his/her proficiency level in each of the competencies required for the position along with the level of importance for each competency. Once the employee has completed and submitted his/her self-assessment the supervisor is sent a system generated e-mail. Note that once the employee completes the assessment process, he/she will not be able to make further updates after the e-mail is sent to the supervisor.

**Supervisor assessment:**

Upon receipt of the system generated e-mail the supervisor assesses the employee’s proficiency level and importance level for each of the competencies required for the position. The supervisor will also identify if the individual competency is required now or in the future.

Q5: Are DoD civilian employees and military personnel required to use DCAT?

A5: Participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged. DCAT was designed and developed to provide a standard method to assess and report DoD General Schedule and equivalent employees’ competency gaps. The tool interfaces with the civilian personnel information in the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS). Military personnel participation in DCAT is limited to military who supervise civilian employees and who volunteer to complete their employee’s competency assessment. They will only use DCAT to assess their civilian employee’s competency proficiency levels within their occupational series.

Q6: How will the Department use DCAT results?

A6: The results of the DCAT competency assessment will be used to develop strategies to close identified competency gaps and inform future training and development plans to effectively manage the Department’s civilian workforce.

Q7: How will the results of employee competency assessments be used or reported?

A7: Individual employee competency assessment results will only be available to the employee and his/her supervisor. As required by Title 10 U.S.C. section 115b, DoD will report the aggregate results of the civilian workforce competency assessments by occupational series to Congress biennially.

Q8: What should supervisors tell their employees about DCAT?
A8: Supervisors should tell their employees who are selected to participate that DCAT is a Department-wide competency assessment tool to validate DoD occupational series competency models and assess competency gaps across the civilian workforce. Supervisors should encourage their employees to participate in the competency assessment to help them understand the competencies and proficiency levels required for success in their position. Supervisors are in a unique position to help their employees understand the results of their individual assessment and help them identify training and experiential development opportunities. Also, a fundamental responsibility of supervisors is to help develop their employees, and this assessment can be an important resource in that regard. We have developed a Supervisor’s Guide as a resource to help Supervisors interpret their employees’ DCAT results and how to use the results to facilitate a discussion with the employee on future career development.

Q9: Is the competency assessment process linked to the development of employee performance plans?

A9: No. The competency assessment process and employee performance plans will not be linked and are considered independent activities. This assessment is for developmental purposes only. Supervisors and employees are encouraged to use the results of the competency assessment process to inform plans for future employee and workforce developmental opportunities.

Q10: What are the benefits of competency assessments to civilian employees?

A10: Competencies benefit not only DoD but help our civilian employees determine what they do well and where they can target areas for improvement. A competency assessment allows employees to formally take stock of their areas of strength and areas for development. Additional benefits include:

- **Providing a Focus for Future Development.** Competency assessment results allow the employee and supervisor to plan for future development or assignments.

- **Increasing Ongoing Dialogue with the Supervisor.** Participating in a competency assessment will provide an opportunity for the employee and supervisor to have an informal discussion on future training and development options.

- **Informing Short- and Long-Term Career Decisions.** Self-assessments can provide insights that lead to identifying one's preferred job, future aspiration or, at the very least, information about one's strengths.