

ASSURING COMPETENCE IN PRACTICAL TASKS

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This poster presentation, by Working Group 4 of Education and Training Platform for Laboratory Animal Science (ET-PLAS), forms part of our outreach mission. We hope to present similar information at other Member States' national association meetings too, in order to begin an open conversation about assessment, gather information on current practices and to strengthen the value to users of the ETPLAS platform when it is launched.

All those working under the Directive 2010/63/EU and the Animals Scientific Procedures Act are required to be trained and supervised until they are competent to carry out procedures alone. It is the Project Licence holder's job, with advice from the NTCO, to determine whether or not a Licensee is competent to begin work. A difficulty is to know whether or not someone has truly reached that stage, and it's particularly challenging in the case of an experienced operator arriving from another institute or country.

So why do we insist on re-assessing competence of staff every time that they arrive at a new institute, as doing so potentially wastes time and resource for both the researcher and the unit staff? But of course we must be certain that the operator is indeed competent!

By examining the fundamentals of the assessment process, we can begin to unpick some of these difficulties: For an assessment to be useful, it must be at least valid (it actually tests what you intend it to test), consistent (the same between different assessors, different times) and transparent (you know what the standard was applied).

This poster introduces the concept of Directly Observed Practical Assessments (DOPS), which set out pre-determined criteria for competence in a technique, thereby making the competence standard clear to all stakeholders. These are well-validated in the healthcare setting for consistency of assessment and have utility in in-vivo research to assure operator competence, therefore reducing study variability and safeguarding animal welfare.