

## Reasonable adjustments competency standards briefing video

### Transcript

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Hi everyone. Welcome to this briefing on competence standards. I'm Graeme Pedlingham, I'm Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Student Experience. And I'm joined by.

**Caroline Roberts:** Caroline Roberts, Head of Legal and Deputy Director of GCGC.

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Great. Thanks, Caroline. So we're going to start off with just some context around why competence standards have come about, what they are. And then we're going to get into a very brief overview of how you might work with them going forward. And then some support that is going to be coming over the next few weeks. So Caroline do you want to start off with some context?

**Caroline Roberts:** Yes. So a number of people will have heard of the Abrahart case, that very sad situation of a student at the University of Bristol and as a result of that, there are lots of positive movements for universities to really consider how they are going to go about assessing students and what it is that is actually at the heart of it, whether it's the assessment itself or whether it's the criteria beneath that that's actually the important attribute. So that's, Graeme's done a lot of work on putting together information that will help ensure that we as a university are compliant with the Equalities Act but are also then being fair and representative and proportionate from a student perspective for how we undergo those assessments.

So Graeme, I'm going to ask you a few questions if that's alright? And we can then inform our colleagues about the approach that we're taking. So what should a competency standard do?

**Graeme Pedlingham:** So a competence standard needs to be a few things. It's probably best thought of as the essential elements for any course subject. Things that a graduate of that subject really can't do without. And there's a number of tests that need to be applied for something to be a competence standard. We put those in the briefing document. One of them is that it has to be objective. So to a layperson, somebody that's not familiar with the subject, it has to be rational. It has to make sense that this would be an essential feature of the course. It also has to be measurable. So it's important to remember that this is a competence standard. So students have to meet a certain standard. So there is a threshold of competence or non competence which has to be met. And when you're looking at where the competence standards are in your course, where are those going to be assessed. You know, where's the standard going to be met.

**Caroline Roberts:** I think that's really helpful Graeme and I think it's worth bearing in mind that there's a number of things that competency standard isn't and when we have the webinar, if people can think about their own situations and maybe bring some examples, if they've got any doubts, we can start to explore those a little bit. But again, the briefing note itself sets out a number of really helpful examples but I think it's just really worth underlining the fact that being able to give a presentation to a class may not in itself be a competency requirement for perhaps how you rewire a car.

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Yeah, exactly. And it's a general principle that an assessment method is very unlikely to be a competence standard in itself. Instead, an assessment method is something that we would be expecting to adjust if a student required reasonable adjustments.

**Caroline Roberts:** Fantastic. How would you go about shaping a competency standard?

**Graeme Pedlingham:** So there's a number of ways into this. And I think, for some people, a competence standard is probably a reasonably unfamiliar concept. So I think the easiest way to go into this is just to look at your course learning outcomes. So in terms of a process, your course learning outcomes will tell you what are the essential things that you think your course is doing. Some of those learning outcomes might meet the criteria for being a competence standard. And then the question is actually, should this be a competence standard or not? Not all course learning outcomes will be competence standards, but it's a good place to start in trying to think through what are the essential features of the course.

There's a few other kind of sources of reference as well. If your course has a PSRB, a professional regulatory body, then sometimes the PSRB will give you the competence standards for your subject. Very helpful. And the other place that's a good reference point is the subject benchmark statements for QAA. So worth having a look at those on the QAA website. And again, some of those are written in the way that they do give you a sense of what the competence standards are. But I think it's important to say we need to determine what the competence standards are for our courses in all subjects, because ultimately it's us saying these are competence standards.

**Caroline Roberts:** That's really helpful because it sounds like you don't have to start with a blank sheet of paper if there are other areas to look to, to shape and inform. And then there's lots of overlap between things like the learning outcomes that are already recorded for courses as a whole.

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Yeah nobody needs to start from scratch.

**Caroline Roberts:** Fantastic. It's worth highlighting, I think that the materials themselves have a number of suggested approaches in them. Yeah, I'm not going to detail them all right here, but the briefing notes that's coming will break those down. No that's really readable. And again, come ready to ask questions about those at the webinar that we're hosting. Do you just want to give a quick summary of what the information looks like and what the next steps will be?

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Yeah, sure. No worries. So what we've put together is very short briefing notes. It's going over some of the things we've talked about here, but in a bit more detail. So those criteria for what a competence is, it'll go through those. It'll go through the steps that you might want to take in identifying competence standards, and it does give few examples of competence standards in different subjects. That's always a little bit tricky because one of the criteria is that it has to be specific to the course. So I think that is a question that we have to look at.

But the other thing that will be in the briefing note is how a competence standard can be written. So some advice and guidance on what does a good, competence standard look like, what is some language that you might want to avoid and how you get that standard built into it and also having inclusive competence standards. So making sure that our competence standards are in themselves inclusive. So it will cover that whole range of things but as Caroline said, we really

want questions. We want you to come along to the Q&A that we're organising and hopefully we'll be able to answer some of them.

**Caroline Roberts:** Just as we wrap up, I think it's just underlining where we started in respect to why it's so important. It's fundamental concepts around equalities for our student body. So it's not just about doing the right thing, it's about doing the right thing well and hopefully then as a university we get to set the tone really positively both for the staff approach and for the student outcome.

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Okay. Yeah. Thank you Caroline. So the briefing note will come out with this recording and we will be having a Q&A which we very much hope to see you there.

**Caroline Roberts:** Thanks, everyone.

**Graeme Pedlingham:** Thank you. Bye bye.