

Guide

Applying for a certificate of competence

From 2024 exams

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1. Introduction

This guide provides information and instructions to assist applicants applying for a certificate of competence for the following statutory functions:

- Mining engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Electrical engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Mechanical engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Undermanager of underground coal mines
- Deputy of underground coal mines
- Mining engineering manager of coal mines other than underground mines
- Open cut examiner of coal mines other than underground mines
- Electrical engineer of coal mines other than underground mines
- Mechanical engineer of coal mines other than underground mines
- Mining engineering manager of underground mines other than coal mines
- Underground mine supervisor of underground mines other than coal mines
- Quarry manager of mines other than underground mines or coal mines
- Note: Cable repair signatory certificate of competence information (including Guide and modules) can be found on the Resources Regulator website

2. Background

Certificates of competence to exercise certain statutory functions are granted under the Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Regulation 2022. A person is eligible to hold a certificate of competence for a statutory function once they have been assessed and deemed competent to exercise that function.

Key requirements to determine competence for a certificate of competence include specified qualifications and experience, satisfying set criteria and an examination process. The assessment process is facilitated by the NSW Resources Regulator, with competence standards determined in consultation with the Mining and Petroleum Competence Board.

In 2019, an independent review of the certificate of competence examination processes found that while the process was valid, relevant, and mostly in line with contemporary practice, enhancements could be made to improve the rigour, reliability and defensibility of examination processes.

In response to this review, a blueprint framework has been developed and implemented, to standardise the way exams are constructed and delivered. The framework will ensure validity, reliability, transparency, and consistency of assessment.

3. Applying for a certificate of competence

Applications for a certificate of competence must satisfy a range of eligibility and application requirements as outlined below.

3.1. Briefing sessions

Briefing sessions for each statutory function are conducted by examination panel members to provide applicants with information about the examination process including key contacts, dates, available resources, and advice to assist with preparing for the exam process.

It is strongly recommended that all applicants attend a briefing session, however, we understand this is not always possible. Therefore, all sessions are recorded and published on the Resources Regulator website, where possible.

Find out when the next briefing session for each statutory function is scheduled and register your interest in attending via [the Briefing Sessions webpage](#).

3.2. Eligibility and application requirements

All applications must include supporting documentation as evidence to satisfy each of the following prerequisites:

Eligibility criteria	Requirement
Age	The minimum age a person will be issued with a certificate of competence is 21. However, an application for a certificate of competence may be submitted before turning 21.
Tertiary and vocational qualifications	Applications must be accompanied by certified documentation. The specific tertiary qualifications required for each statutory function is outlined in your relevant statutory function guideline document . Refer to the Factsheet: Recognition of qualifications and units of competence for further general information on what may be acceptable.
Relevant practical experience	All applicants must demonstrate the relevant practical experience required for each statutory function as outlined in your relevant statutory function guideline document. Also ensure you refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide – Experience pre-requisites explained for certificate of competence application on our Certificate of competence guide webpage • Sample entry of experience in an online application for certificate of competence on How to apply webpage.
Emergency preparedness and response competency	All applicants must provide evidence of successfully completing the required unit of competence in emergency preparedness and response. Details about the unit of competence required for each statutory function is outlined in your relevant statutory function guideline document.

Eligibility criteria	Requirement
	Refer to the Factsheet: Recognition of qualifications and units of competence for further general information on what may be acceptable.
Blasting competency	Only applicants for the certificate of competence Quarry manager of mines other than underground mines or coal mines are required to provide evidence of successfully completing the required unit of competence in blasting.
Candidate portfolio	All applicants must submit a portfolio to demonstrate knowledge and experience. Evidence may include certificates, documented work tasks or records. Portfolio requirements for each statutory function is outlined in your relevant statutory function guideline document. Further general information is available on our Competencies and portfolios webpage .

3.3. Application fees

The certificate of competence examination process involves application fees that must be paid via our 3rd party payment gateway when submitting applications.

Once an application has been assessed and approved, applicants will be invited to sit for the examinations. Additional examination fees will be requested and must be paid prior to sitting the exam.

The fee schedule is outlined on the Examination fee schedule [on our How to apply webpage](#).

3.4. Submitting applications and registering for an exam

All applications must be made online via the [Resources Regulator portal \(Mining workers\)](#).

Applications should include supporting documentation to satisfy the prerequisites for the relevant statutory function and applicable fees must be paid upon submission.

Once you have submitted your application, you will be able to register for an exam.

All supporting documentation other than the portfolio evidence must be certified as a true copy by an authorised certifier and applicants must provide documentation to enable the Resources Regulator to verify the identification of applicants.

Information about how to certify documents and what identification records are required are outlined in the certifying documents and verifying identity fact sheet [on the How to apply webpage](#).

Note: Applicants are responsible for ensuring applications are accurate and complete, including supporting certified documentation, and that fees and submission are finalised prior to the closing date.

3.5. Application outcomes

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible. Successful applicants will be invited to sit for the examination via email. Applicants are required to confirm exam attendance and pay the required exam fee prior to sitting the exam.

4. The examination processes

A key requirement to determine competence for statutory functions is for applicants to pass an examination process that may include written and/or oral exams.

To assist with preparing for the written examination refer to your relevant statutory function description and competencies framework available on our [competencies and portfolios web page](#).

Additional resources, including examples of the types of questions you may be asked in a written exam and oral exam and a sample examination paper, are also available [here](#).

New candidates are candidates who have either submitted an application or started a new examination round after 1st July 2022.

All other candidates are considered existing candidates.

4.1. Written exams

If you satisfy all prerequisites and your application is approved, you will be invited to sit the written exam(s). A written exam fee must be paid prior to sitting the examination.

Blueprint

The examination panel will create a blueprint of how competencies will be assessed each year so all are assessed every 3 years at least.

Each written exam will assess competencies from the [framework](#) that candidates must satisfy:

- Essential competencies – those ranked as essential by the examination panel for each statutory function will be assessed in questions that are identified as essential to pass in full or a sub part. Candidates must achieve the minimum mark or converted percentage for each of them to pass the exam paper.
- Other competencies – a selection of other competencies will also be assessed in questions which have a minimum mark to demonstrate competence. The minimum mark or converted percentage for each question and that obtained by each candidate are totalled to determine whether overall the candidate achieved the minimum mark to pass the exam paper. For example the minimum mark or percentage out of 100 may be 66.

A pass for each the written exam paper is a prerequisite for progressing to the oral exam.

Note: existing candidates will continue to sit under the rules that applied when they sat their written exams. They will receive a three-year credit for a pass in any individual paper. At the end of this three-year period, the credit will expire.

4.1.1. Resitting a written examination

For new candidates, if you do not pass the written exam, you will need to submit a new application for the next calendar round of exams via the [mining workers portal](#).

For existing candidates, if you do not pass the written exam, you will need to apply for a re-examination of the written exam as a pass for the written exam is a prerequisite for progressing to the oral exam. You will need to pay the application fee again. If your application for re-examination is successful, you will be invited to resit the exam. You will need to pay the examination fee again which must be paid prior to the exam date.

All existing candidates must register to resit for any examinations via the [Resources Regulator portal \(Mining workers\)](#) before the exam closing date.

4.2. Oral exams

New candidates who are assessed as competent in the written exam will be invited to sit the oral exam. The oral exam will be conducted like an interview where you will be asked questions by the panel of examiners.

Oral exam fees must be paid before sitting the examination. The link to pay will be sent to you together with your invitation.

Blueprint

The oral exam consists of questions where the candidate must achieve the minimum mark, number of items and/or specific items in their answer for each of them in order to pass the exam. The competencies mapped to each question can be essential or other types, as explained in 4.1 for written exams, except all questions are essential and must be passed.

A candidate who is assessed as competent for all questions may be recommended by the examination panel to the Resources Regulator (Chief Inspector) to be granted a certificate. The exception may be if the candidate provides a response to a question that would cause a fatality or serious injury, then the examination panel may assess the candidate as not yet competent overall and recommend they not be granted a certificate.

If a candidate is assessed as 'not yet competent' at their first round of oral exam, they will be eligible to resit the second oral exam in that round of exams. The resit oral examination will be conducted to examine all the competencies with topics for each candidate in full as per the blueprint, regardless of whether the candidate was competent for some in their previous oral exam attempt in that round.

Should a candidate fail to sit a or both oral exam attempt/s in an exam round they will forfeit those exam opportunities.

Should an extenuating circumstance stop you from attending an oral exam, you are to call the Mining Competencies Team immediately.

Note: existing candidates will continue to sit under the rules that applied when they sat their exams. If they are assessed as 'not yet competent' for their first oral exam, then they will be permitted to attempt the oral exam two more times within three years of passing the written exam.

4.2.1. Resitting an oral examination

For new candidates, if you do not pass your first oral exam you are permitted to attempt the oral exam one more time within the current round of the exams in that year of passing the written exam.

You will need to apply for a re-examination of the oral exam. Application fees must be paid at the time of application for resit. If you are assessed as not yet competent for a resit attempt of the oral exam, you must put in a new application to sit and pass the written exam before you will be permitted to make further attempts at the oral exam.

You must register to resit for any examinations via the [Resources Regulator portal \(Mining workers\)](#) before the exam closing date.

The resit oral examination will be conducted in full to examine all the competencies with topics for each candidate as per the blueprint, regardless of whether the candidate was competent for some in their previous oral exam attempt in that round.

Note: existing candidates will continue to sit under the rules that applied when they sat their exams. If they are assessed as 'not yet competent' for their first oral exam, then they will be permitted to attempt the oral exam two more times within 3 years of passing the written exam.

5. Certificate of competence

5.1. Being granted a certificate of competence

A certificate of competence may be granted once an applicant has been deemed to satisfy all prerequisites and successfully completed written and/or oral examinations.

5.2. Practising certificates

Candidates may apply for, and be issued with, a practising certificate at the same time as applying for a certificate of competence. If you tick the box to decline a practising certificate in your original online application, you will be required to apply separately later and pay the fee, prior to working in the statutory position at a mine. If you do not apply within 1 year of being granted your certificate of competence, then an additional 20% of maintenance of competence requirements may be a condition for you to complete in the first year of your practising certificate.

The fees that apply for practising certificate application are outlined in the [fee schedule](#) and the application form is completed through the Resources Regulator portal ([Mining workers](#)).

More information is available on the [Apply for a practising certificate web page](#).

5.3. Maintenance of competence

Holders of a practising certificate are required to keep up to date with knowledge and skills in-order-to exercise a statutory function. The maintenance of competence scheme requires holders of practising certificates to undertake specified hours of recognised learning to maintain competence over the five-year period that a certificate is valid for.

It is the responsibility of statutory function practitioners to be aware of the learning requirements and document completed learning hours and topics in a logbook over the period of the practising certificate.

Practitioners must also apply to renew practising certificates with a declaration of learning every five years.

More information is available on the [Maintenance of competence web page](#).

6. Further information

More information about the certificate of competence examination process is available on our website or by contacting the Mining Competencies and Authorisations Unit at:

Email: mca@regional.nsw.gov.au

Phone: 1800 814 609 (option 2 > option 3)

Post: Mining Competencies and Authorisations Unit

NSW Resources Regulator

PO Box 344, Hunter Region Mail Centre NSW 2310

7. Statutory function guides

There are separate guides for each of the following statutory functions on the [Certificate of competence guide web page](#) providing further information about the prerequisites and examination details for each:

- Mining engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Electrical engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Mechanical engineering manager of underground coal mines
- Undermanager of underground coal mines
- Deputy of underground coal mines
- Mining engineering manager of coal mines other than underground mines
- Open cut examiner of coal mines other than underground mines
- Electrical engineer of coal mines other than underground mines
- Mechanical engineer of coal mines other than underground mines
- Mining engineering manager of underground mines other than coal mines
- Underground mine supervisor of underground mines other than coal mines
- Quarry manager of mines other than underground mines or coal mines
- Cable repair signatory

Potential applicants and candidates should also attend the [briefing session](#) for their function to be informed by the examination panel on how they plan to examine in each new round of exams in a year. Refer section 3.1.