

# Assessment provider standards for humanitarian action – a working document

**Pilot Version March 2018**



humanitarian  
leadership  
academy



redruk  
people and skills for disaster relief



Pearson

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The assessment provider standards aim to improve the quality of assessment linked to humanitarian action and give people confidence in their ability to help communities who are vulnerable to or affected by crises.

These standards are based on extensive consultation by a consortium made up of the Bioforce Institute, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Pearson and RedR UK. They are the result of a joint drafting process involving many people and organisations, and do not represent the views of any one organisation.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the following people who helped to develop the standards by sharing their experience and good practices during the consultation and by giving feedback on the drafts and being ready to pilot them.

The teams from the Bioforce Institute, the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Pearson and RedR UK

Those who took part in the consultation workshop

The people we interviewed and those who responded to our surveys and questionnaires

The writers who helped us review the standards after the consultation stage

The advisors who helped us review all the different versions of the standards and who also contributed to their development in other ways

*This section will be revised and completed in preparation of the final version of the standards.*

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# Glossary

**You (the assessment provider)** – organisations, companies, departments, groups and institutes providing competency assessment services to anyone involved in humanitarian action.

**Assessment services** – services you offer to candidates to assess competencies, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

**Candidates** – people whose competencies are being assessed.

**Competencies** – a set of behaviours a person must demonstrate, based on their knowledge, skills and experiences, to perform effectively in a given situation.

**Competency frameworks** – an established group of competencies needed to carry out specific roles.

**Humanitarian action** – action taken to save lives, reduce suffering and maintain human dignity during and after crises and natural disasters, as well as action taken to prevent and prepare for them. (Adapted from ALNAP’s Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide 2016, page 369.)

**Key actions** – actions you take to achieve the standards.

**Modality** – the method you use to carry out assessments, for example online tests, simulation exercises, oral exams and written tests.

**People involved in humanitarian action** – anyone who works to meet the needs of communities that are vulnerable to or affected by crises, for example non-governmental organisation (NGO) staff, community members, volunteers, government staff and donors.

**Resources** – money, materials, staff and other assets that a person or organisation needs to be able to carry out their work.

**Standards** – requirements, specifications, guidelines or characteristics that can be used consistently to make sure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose (ISO definition <https://www.iso.org/standards.html>). In this document they describe what you should do to meet the overall commitment that people involved in humanitarian action are able to provide a record showing that they have the competencies to carry out humanitarian work, which will lead to better employment and volunteering opportunities.

## **What are the assessment provider standards?**

These standards provide criteria to measure the quality of assessment that you are providing. You can use them as a basis for checking your performance and to guide improvements.

We have designed them for organisations, companies, departments and institutes who provide assessment services to anyone involved in humanitarian action.

If you meet these standards, you are contributing to the overall commitment that people involved in humanitarian action are able to provide a record showing that they have the competencies to carry out humanitarian work, which will lead to better employment and volunteering opportunities.

## **Background**

Since 2012, an initiative led by 22 key-sector organisations has aimed to develop a way of displaying learning credentials and experience of humanitarian work (HPass). One of the aims of the initiative was to give people credentials they could show to employers so that they could quickly begin work in humanitarian organisations.

HPass is a step towards making the humanitarian sector as professional as it possibly can be, with the highest levels of competence and integrity. To achieve this, we will need to:

- establish the main competencies that are needed;
- provide high-quality learning and assessment of these competencies; and
- recognise skills, experience and learning.

The preliminary HPass inception report, commissioned by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy (the Academy), showed that learning and assessment providers would welcome standards that can measure the quality of their services (HPI Inception Reports, Outputs 2 and 3, 2016 (unpublished material)). Many learning and assessment providers invest considerable resources in making sure their services are of a high quality. However, the report found that while providers used some internal and external standards, there was no single, affordable standard that was widely accepted or which directly met their needs.

In 2017, we (the Academy, the Bioforce Institute, Pearson Education, and RedR UK) formed a consortium to help develop a quality framework for providing learning and assessment, including standards, quality-assurance tools and guidance material.

### **How the standards were developed**

In February 2017 we began a comprehensive consultation to design the standards. Before the consultation, we decided the key questions we would ask people. We asked the questions using a virtual notepad, in the four languages chosen for the standards: Arabic, English, French, and Spanish. This first set of questions focused on what high-quality training and assessment mean.

This phase of consultation led to the first version of the standards, which was reviewed by an advisory group chosen from key-sector stakeholders and a management group representing all consortium partners. We then drafted a version to use in the face-to-face consultation phase. Face-to-face consultation took place between May and July 2017 in seven international regions. 163 people took part from 16 countries and 102 organisations. We carried out 55 semi-structured interviews with 70 stakeholders and held three focus group discussions, which 12 people took part in.

To try to reach as many stakeholders as possible, we carried out an online consultation survey in July 2017. This survey was completed by 148 people.

A writers' group, made up of interested stakeholders identified during the face-to-face consultation, reviewed the consultation findings. The group included 55 people from 14 countries.

Overall, 408 stakeholders from 382 organisations from more than 60 countries contributed to the content of these standards.

The need to make sure that the standards can be quality-assured was a theme that ran through all stages of the consultation.

## **What the standards cover**

We have developed these standards to meet the assessment needs of people who respond to crises, including those working in preparedness, prevention and recovery.

People working in development and other areas closely linked to humanitarian action may also find that these standards apply, although they may need to be adapted to specific needs and contexts.

The standards are meant to support national regulations (where they exist), not replace them. They offer you the opportunity to compare your services with similar providers working in other parts of the world.

## **Who are these standards for?**

We have designed these standards for organisations, companies, departments and institutes who provide assessment services to anyone involved in humanitarian action. You can use them to guide external assessment, or include them as part of your human resources role.

Assessment services may take place:

- at the end of the learning process;
- during recruitment activities;
- as part of professional development and progression; or
- at any point when a staff member or candidate wants to have their competencies assessed.

These standards apply to all assessment providers, whatever their size and the scope of their services.

## Structure

There are seven assessment provider standards, each with associated key actions. Standards 1 to 3 cover the assessment cycle logic, and standards 4 to 7 describe support processes and requirements. Together they contribute to the overall commitment that people involved in humanitarian action are able to provide a record showing that they have the competencies to carry out humanitarian work, which will lead to better employment and volunteering opportunities.

- The **standards** describe what you need to do to meet the overall commitment.
- Each standard has associated **key actions** that you need to carry out.
  - The following three **principles** support the standards.
    - Accessibility
    - Impartiality
    - Inclusivity
- Candidates comment on each standard and demonstrate what they experience when a standard is met.

## How to use the standards

We have designed the standards so that they are flexible enough to be used by different types of assessment providers and circumstances in different regions, countries, areas and communities.

To meet the standards, you must carry out the key actions. Key actions are **what need to be in place** to make sure the assessment services are of a high quality. There is more information and guidance on how to carry out the key actions in the handbook that accompanies this document.

There is also a quality-assurance mechanisms manual, which will tell you how to measure, and show evidence of, key actions.

## **Principles**

Humanitarian action is generally guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We have created these standards with these principles in mind because their goal is to contribute to more effective humanitarian action.

To help you provide high-quality assessment we have also identified the following three principles.

**Accessibility:** Aim to reach those who have limited or no access to learning and assessment opportunities. Also look at barriers to taking part in learning or assessment processes (these may include location and financial restrictions, language skills, literacy and numeracy levels, and physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments).

**Impartiality:** Carry out processes and treat people fairly and equally.

**Inclusivity:** Include everyone, whatever their age, sex, marital status, race, nationality, disability, religious or other beliefs, sexuality, or social or educational background.

# Overview of the assessment provider standards

## Overall commitment

People involved in humanitarian action are able to provide a record showing that they have the competencies to carry out humanitarian work, which will lead to better employment and volunteering opportunities.

## Standard 1 – Analysis

Relevant assessment needs are identified.

## Standard 2 – Design

Assessment programmes are designed and prepared according to identified needs.

## Standard 3 – Delivery

Assessments are delivered effectively and accurately.

## Standard 4 – Evaluation and accountability

The quality of assessment services is maintained and improved.

## Standard 5 – Resources

There are enough appropriate resources.

## Standard 6 – Communication

Communication is open and accessible.

## Standard 7 – Administration

Administration systems are secure and accurate.

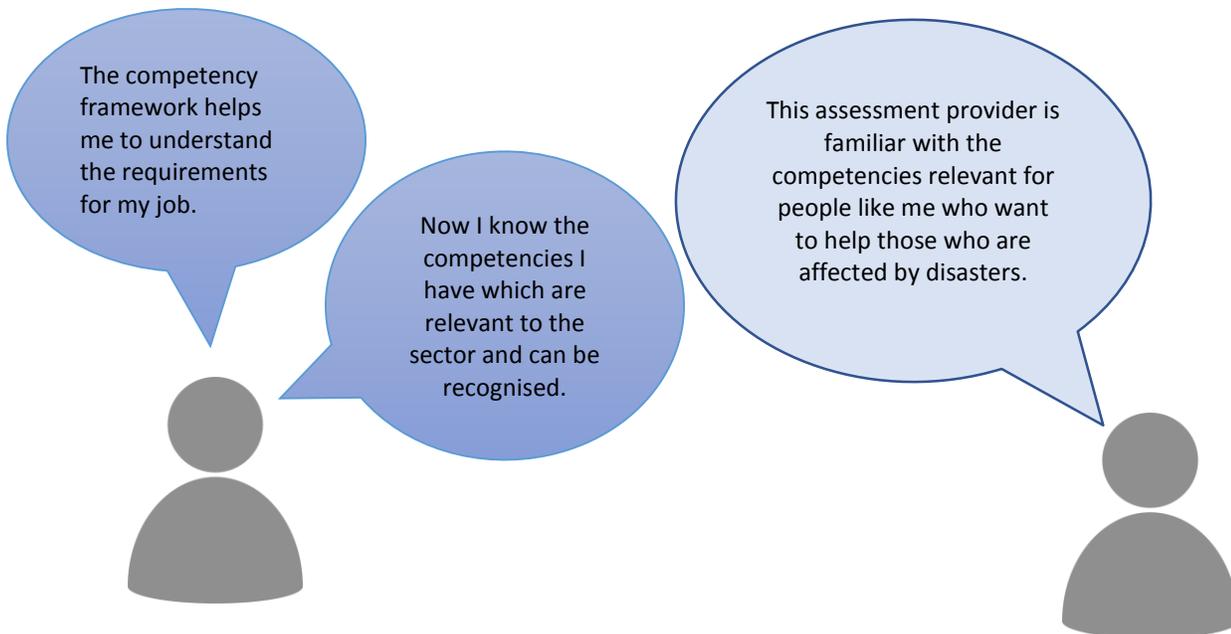
## Standard 1 - Analysis

### Relevant assessment needs are identified

#### Key actions

##### You will:

- 1.1 identify and evaluate candidates' overall objectives for the assessment;
- 1.2 list the specific areas of competence that candidates are to be assessed against;
- 1.3 identify existing competency frameworks within humanitarian and other sectors;
- 1.4 analyse the relevance of the identified competency frameworks;
- 1.5 select and use existing relevant competency frameworks or create new ones; and
- 1.6 decide on appropriate assessment modalities for the candidate.



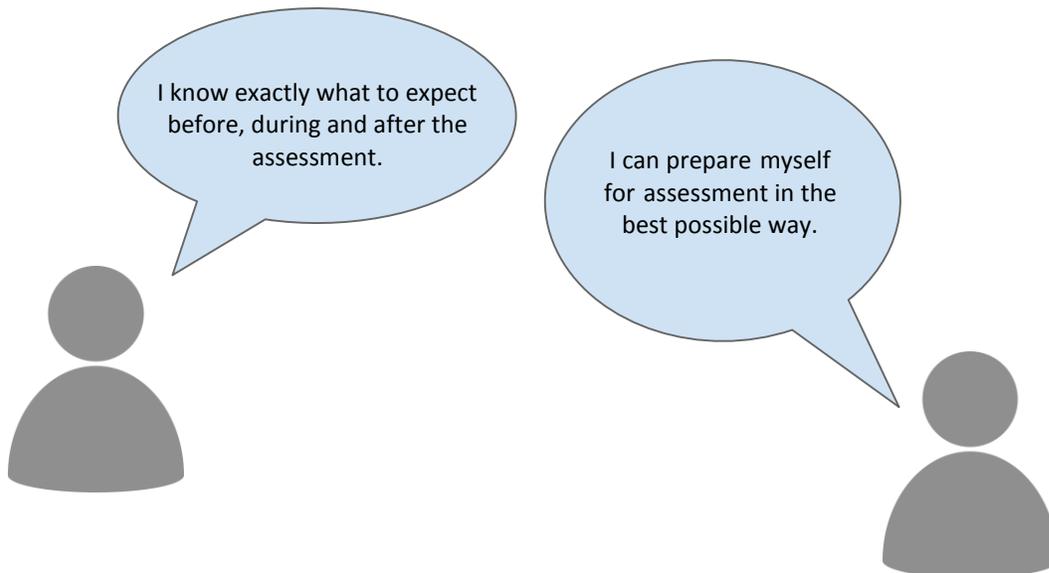
## Standard 2 - Design

**Assessment programmes are designed and prepared according to identified needs**

### Key actions

**You will:**

- 2.1 based on the competency frameworks you have selected, define measurable assessment objectives in terms of the knowledge, skills or full competencies that candidates will be able to demonstrate through the assessment;
- 2.2 have clearly defined criteria for candidates to be assessed against from the selected competency frameworks;
- 2.3 choose and plan the steps for a consistent, inclusive and impartial assessment process;
- 2.4. define the expected outcomes of each step of the assessment process; and
- 2.5 choose or create appropriate assessment tools for each step of the process.



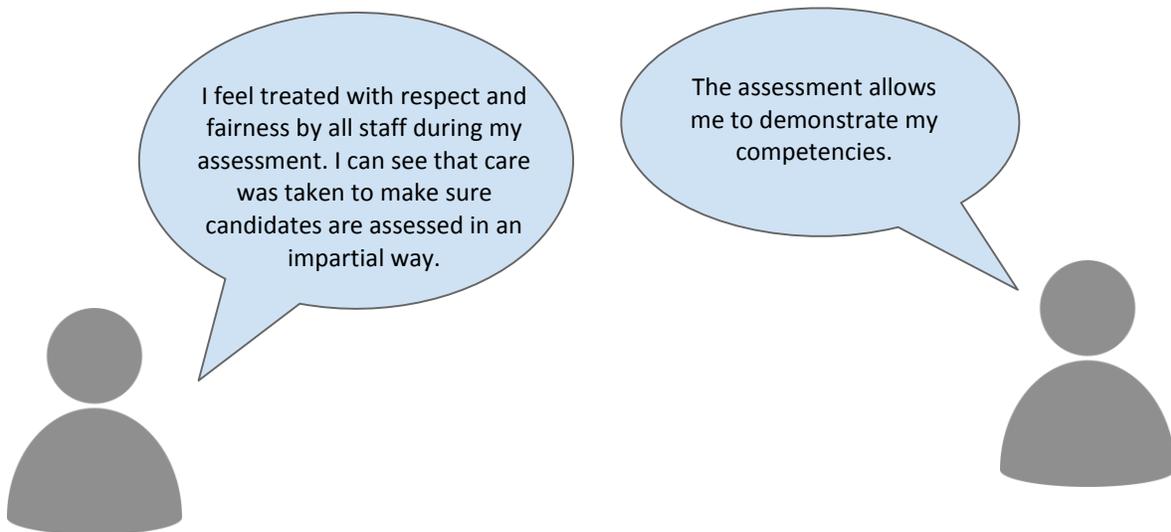
## Standard 3 - Delivery

**Assessments are delivered effectively and accurately**

### Key actions

#### You will:

- 3.1 carry out assessments as designed;
- 3.2 make sure the results of assessments are interpreted in a standardised and impartial way, and that they are based on evidence;
- 3.3 create a safe environment in which to deliver clear, standardised and impartial assessments;
- 3.4 have in place reasonable measures to make sure candidates are safe and secure and that their wellbeing is protected.
- 3.5 monitor candidates' progress;
- 3.6 deliver assessment reports (and recognised badges and certificates if available).



## **Standard 4 – Evaluation and accountability**

**The quality of assessment services is maintained and improved**

### **Key actions**

**You will:**

- 4.1 design and put in place methods of monitoring and evaluating assessment services;
- 4.2 use transparent and accessible methods to receive and give open feedback;
- 4.3 record and deal with concerns and complaints; and
- 4.4 use lessons learnt and best practice to guide change, encourage continuous improvement and make sure assessment services remain fit for purpose.



The assessment provider is concerned with quality assurance and they try to improve the assessment process continuously. I'm confident that they are accountable and I know that my opinion will be taken into account with regards to the whole assessment experience.

## Standard 5 - Resources

**There are enough appropriate resources**

### **Key actions**

**You will:**

- 5.1 identify what resources you need to design and deliver effective assessments;
- 5.2 put in place procedures for getting, maintaining and managing enough appropriate resources;
- 5.3 make sure there are competent and appropriate staff available to design and deliver assessments;
- 5.4 treat staff in a fair and open way and not discriminate against them; and
- 5.5 have in place reasonable measures to make sure staff are safe and secure and that their wellbeing is protected.



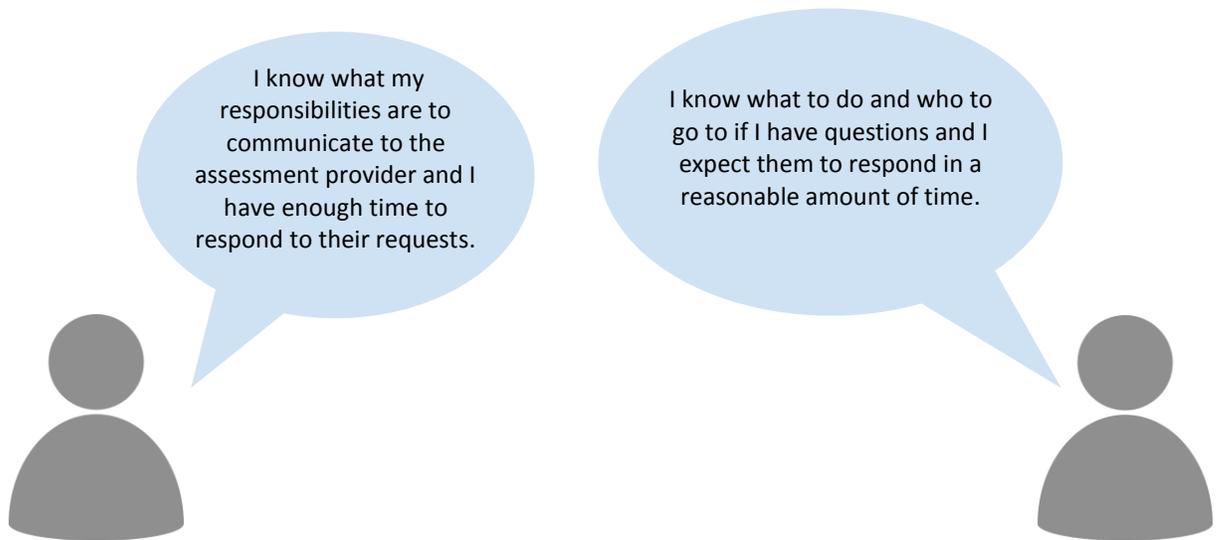
## Standard 6 - Communication

### Communication is open and accessible

#### Key actions

##### You will:

- 6.1 establish and maintain appropriate and accessible communication with candidates and organisations;
- 6.2 provide relevant, clear and accurate information about assessment services;
- 6.3 communicate clearly, accurately and in good time;
- 6.4 respond to queries appropriately and in good time; and
- 6.5 provide effective reporting and analysis to organisations, when required.



## Standard 7 - Administration

### Administration systems are secure and accurate

#### Key actions

##### You will:

- 7.1 provide effective administrative and logistical support for candidates and organisations;
- 7.2 establish and put in place procedures for safely and securely managing confidential assessment materials;
- 7.3 store candidates' information using secure and appropriate data-management procedures;
- 7.4 make sure assessment results are delivered and can be retrieved (if necessary) in good time; and
- 7.5 keep candidates' information and records confidential.

